

A SURVEY OF THE MYTHOLOGY OF KIEVAN RUS'
AND ITS SURVIVALS IN THE FOLKLORE
OF THE EASTERN SLAVS

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A SURVEY OF THE MYTHOLOGY OF KIEVAN RUS' AND ITS SURVIVALS
IN THE FOLKLORE OF THE EASTERN SLAVS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES

by

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EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SEPTEMBER, 1963.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A Survey of the Mythology of Kievan Rus' and Its Survivals in the Folklore of the Eastern Slavs" submitted by George Dan Foty in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND	5
Prehistoric Religions in the Territory of the	
Eastern Slavs	5
Religion of the hunters	5
Religion of the agriculturists.	7
Religion of the pastoral peoples	11
Foreign Influences on the Development of Rus'	
Mythology	14
The Cimmerians	15
The Scythians	16
The Greeks	17
The Celts	17
The Sarmatians	18
The Romans	18
Miscellaneous contributions	19
Religion of the Antes	21
III. THE MAJOR DEITIES IN RUS' MYTHOLOGY	32
Svaroh	33
Perun	38
Khors	42
Dazhboh	44
Stryboh	45
Semargl	47

MEMORANDUM

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CHAPTER	PAGE
Mokosh	48
Volos	50
IV. THE RELIGIOUS CULTUS	57
Idols	57
Temples	62
Priests	66
Worship, Sacrifice, and Divination	69
Funeral Customs	72
V. NATURE-WORSHIP	79
The Earth	80
Plants	82
Animals and Birds	85
Water	89
Fire	91
The Sun, Moon, and Stars	93
The Seasons	97
Calendar Festivals	99
VI. DEMONOLOGY	110
Ancestor-Spirits	110
Nature-Spirits	115
Field divinities	115
Forest divinities	116
Water divinities	118
Demons	124
Witches and Sorcerers	131
VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS	140
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES	143

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The noted Ukrainian philologist A.Potebnya, reflecting on the superficial and often condescending approach to the study of Slavic mythology¹ in the nineteenth century, stated:

Too hastily did we bury Slavic mythology. The comparison of Greek and Sanskrit names indicates that a highly developed religion existed even prior to the separation of the Greeks and the Indians. It would be strange, therefore, if the Slavs did not share this common heritage.... The deliberate omission of references to this by our chroniclers and foreign scribes, and their superficial descriptions of popular beliefs may be attributed to the contemptuous attitudes of the Christian authors towards heathenism. To draw only negative conclusions about Slavic mythology, given insufficient information, would hence be unsound. It is possible that someone might have deduced that the Slavs possessed no early folk-poetry had it not been for the fortunate preservation of the epic, Lay of Ihor's Campaign.²

This criticism of the pessimistic attitude in the evaluation of Slavic mythology may be applied to most later scholars as well.³ The majority of these were, and in some cases still are, of the opinion that Slavic mythology represented only a weakly developed religious system, which combined within it the primitive features of animistic nature-worship and of a poorly evolved cult of ancestor-worship. Among the mythologies of the Indo-European peoples, the pre-Christian religion of the Slavs was considered to be the most primitive — inferior not only to the highly developed Greek, Roman, and Iranian religions, but also to the poorer Teutonic and Celtic mythologies.⁴ Such a derogatory appraisal of Slavic mythology appears to stem not only from a lack of historical information,⁵ but also from the fact that the study of Slavic culture in general laboured under a theory of ethnic inferiority.⁶ According to this theory the Slavs were the most primitive of the Indo-European peoples,

their culture having developed only as a result of extensive borrowings from their neighbors, primarily the Teutons and the Iranians. The influence of this theory on the study of Slavic mythology may be seen in the various interpretations which have been proposed for the major deities, almost all of whom were at one time explained as borrowings from foreign religions. The etymological derivations of the names of these gods and the explanations of their functions were therefore often based on highly imaginative speculations.

Recent archeological discoveries, however, contradict this theory and offer evidence of highly developed proto-Slavic cultures on the territories of the Eastern and the Western Slavs at the beginning of the second millennium B.C..⁷ These cultures are believed to be the descendants of even older, highly developed, autochthonous cultures (such as Trypillya), which were later conquered and assimilated by the Indo-Europeans. In the light of this information, it would seem proper to re-evaluate the ideas expressed by the earlier scholars on the pre-Christian religion of the Slavs.

In the present work the author proposes to discuss the development and the nature of the religious beliefs on the territory of the Eastern Slavs. The survey consists of an examination of heathen elements from the earliest beginnings of religion, at the dawn of prehistory, through the period of their maximum development in the state religion of Kievan Rus', to their present-day survivals in the East Slavic folklore. Chapters two, three, and four of the survey will attempt to provide an insight into the mythology of Kievan Rus',⁸ through an analysis of the information available from archeological and literary sources. Interpretation of this information is carried out, whenever possible,

on the basis of comparative mythology. The fifth and sixth chapters deal with beliefs and customs as preserved in the folklore of the Eastern Slavs; this material is closely analyzed to detect and interpret the survivals of heathen elements. The relics of ancient beliefs and customs in Ukrainian, Russian, and White Russian folklores are very often authentic reflections of the pre-Christian religion of Kievan Rus'.

FOOTNOTES

1. The expression "Slavic mythology" is actually used incorrectly, in that the myths proper to the Slavic gods have unfortunately been lost. It would be more fitting to say the "Pre-Christian Religion of the Slavs"; however, the expression "Slavic mythology" is generally accepted.

2. A.Potebnya, Sbornik Khar'kovskogo istoricheskogo-filologicheskogo obshchestva, IV, p. 44, translated by G.F. from M.Hrushevsky, Istoriya ukrayins'koyi literatury (New York, 1959), I, p. 325.

3. The foremost works on Slavic mythology are: A.Afanasiev, Poeticheskie vozzreniya Slavyan na prirodu (Moscow, 1865); A.Brückner, Mitologja słowiańska (Cracow, 1918); A.Famintsin, Bozhestva drevnikh Slavyan (1884); V.Jagič, "Zur slavischen Mythologie," Archiv für slavische Philologie (Berlin, 1920), XXXVII; N.Kostomarov, Slavyanskaya mifologiya (1847); L.Leger, La Mythologie slave (Paris, 1901); H.Máchal, Nákres slovanského bájeslovi (Prague, 1891); V.Mansikka, Die Religion der Ostslaven (Helsinki, 1921); L.Niederle, Život stárych Slovanů (Prague, 1916), II.

4. See L.Niederle, Slavyanské drevnosti (Moscow, 1956), p. 269.

5. The main sources of information about the pre-Christian religion of the Slavs are the following: Nestor's Primary Chronicle (twelfth century); the chronicles and biographies of Theitmar of Merseburg, Adam of Bremen, Helmold, Otto of Bremberg, and Saxo Grammaticus (tenth to twelfth centuries); the historic epic Lay of Ihor's Campaign (twelfth c.); ecclesiastical writings, sermons, and canonical rules designed to combat heathen survivals in dvoverie (tenth to fifteenth c.); the interpolation of Slavic gods in translated works, such as the Malala Chronicle (eleventh c.); the writings of Arab historians and geographers, particularly Masudi, Ibn-Fosslan, and Ibn-Roste (tenth to eleventh c.); the writings of the Byzantine historian Procopius and the Gothic chronicler Jordanis (sixth c.); and the rich Slavic folklore with its teeming demonology, numerous yearly cycle feasts, family rites and customs, epic tales, sayings, riddles, songs, and games — all of which reflect the spiritual culture of the remote past.

6. See: K.Penka, Die Herkunft der Arier (1886); G.Kossinna, Das Weichselland, ein uralter Heimatboden der Germanen (Danzig, 1919); J.Peisker, Die aelteren Beziehungen der Slaven zu Turkotataren u. Germanen (1905).

7. See Y.Pasternak, Arkheolohiya Ukrayiny (Toronto, 1961), p. 539. Soviet scholars, moreover, go even further, claiming that Slavic characteristics are noticeable in the autochthonous cultures as early as the fourth and third millenniums B.C.. See A.Mongait, Archaeology in the U.S.S.R. (Moscow, 1959), p. 315.

8. One should note that, although there are many beliefs and customs common to all the Slavs, there are many beliefs which are characteristic of each Slavic branch and still others which are particular to each Slavic nationality. It is advisable, therefore, to consider the pre-Christian beliefs and customs of the Slavs separately for each of the ancient political centers in which they developed and grew into mythological systems or state religions. Hence the expression "mythology of Kievan Rus'" refers to the pre-Christian religion of the Eastern Slavs in general — the inhabitants of the territory under the political control of the Kievan State, who were subject to Kievan cultural and spiritual influences — and to the religious beliefs and customs of the Polyany tribe in particular — the founders of this state, and the chief contributors to its mythology.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

I. PREHISTORIC RELIGION IN THE TERRITORY OF THE EASTERN SLAVS

The study of prehistoric religion is based on the analysis of such archeological materials as amulets, fetishes, symbolic images, idols, temples, sacrificial altars, and burial places. These archeological relics of early religions are interpreted in the light of the information preserved in historic records of ancient, highly developed civilizations, and by comparison with the religious beliefs of present-day primitive societies. Such an approach permits one to deduce with a high degree of certainty many of primitive man's religious beliefs, his sacred objects, and his manner of worship. Since even the most developed monotheistic religions possess certain elements of very primitive origin, the study of prehistoric religion enables one not only to distinguish these primitive elements, but also to trace their evolution through the various stages of civilization. A review of the archeological evidence of prehistoric religious elements in the territory of the Eastern Slavs therefore appears essential for the proper interpretation of the historically poorly attested mythology of Kievan Rus'.¹ Since many similar elements are traceable in both prehistoric religions in the territory of Eastern Slavs and present-day East Slavic folklore, it may be correct to infer a continuity in the development of these religious concepts, and hence their existence in the mythology of Kievan Rus'.

Religion of the hunters. The oldest relics which provide information about early religious beliefs in the territory of the Eastern

Slavs are dated in the Paleolithic Age. The discovery in a site of mammoth hunters near the village of Kostenki, on the river Don, of several human skeletons covered with red ochre and a large number of female figurines, characterized by exaggerated breasts, belly, and buttocks, provides some insight into the religious concepts of the time.² The use of red ochre in burial customs in all probability denotes a primitive belief in after-life; red ochre seems to have been a symbolic vitalizing agent — the color red undoubtedly being associated with blood.³ As for the female figurines, these were, apparently, either fertility amulets or actual fetishes used in the cult of the early Mother-goddess.⁴ This cult, originating in a matriarchal social organization, reflects the worship by the primitive hunters of the outward signs of female fecundity as symbols of procreation and continuation of life. A discovery of a somewhat later site of Paleolithic hunters near the village of Mizyn in Ukraine, revealed, in addition to the fetishes of the Mother-goddess, a figurine of a man, several phallic symbols, and some statuettes of birds and animals.⁵ The appearance of the male image and its symbols probably indicates an increased importance in the fertility cult of the male role in the process of procreation. As for the statuettes of birds and animals, many of which appeared in sitting positions, these seem to represent fetishes associated with totemistic beliefs; such statuettes may have been venerated as symbols of the sacred animals and birds from which the different clans of hunters traced their origin.⁶

In still another discovery of a Paleolithic site, near the village of Balamutivka on the river Dniester,⁷ archeologists found a cave decorated with paintings portraying curious arrangements of animals of prey and human beings. The overall appearance of the cave and the paintings is

very similar to those found at Trois-Frères, in France, and hence one may infer that the cavern was the centre of a hunting cult. The cult ritual, which, to judge from the chip marks on the animal images, probably included a symbolic recreation of the chase by striking the images with weapons, was to all appearances intended for the assurance of success in future hunting expeditions.

Funeral customs of the Late Paleolithic Era are characterized by the inhumation of the corpse in a contracted position.⁸ The unusual position of the corpse and the fact that some of the skeletons show signs of mutilation reflect primitive man's fear of the dead.⁹ To prevent the deceased from returning and harming or haunting the living, it appears that primitive man resorted to binding the corpse in a tightly contracted position, and as a further precautionary measure, to mutilating the body.¹⁰

One may conclude, therefore, that in the earliest cultures, where the existence of man depended upon the uncertain sustenance of the chase, the religious concepts and beliefs of the hunters centered upon the cults of fertility, food supply, and death.

Religion of the agriculturists. The introduction of agriculture in the Near East at the beginning of the fourth millennium B.C. had a stimulating effect on the development of man's material and spiritual cultures. The first evidence of an agricultural civilization on the lands of the Eastern Slavs is found at the end of the fourth millennium on the territories of Ukraine and Moldavia. This culture, known as Trypillya (Tripolye), extended from the south-eastern ranges of the Carpathian Mountains to the middle reaches of the Dnieper River.¹¹ Archeological excavation

of Trypillya settlements has revealed many cult objects which reflect a considerably advanced religious system. The female figurines found at these sites¹² are artistically superior to those of the preceding hunting cultures and resemble in appearance the female figurines discovered in the Near East.¹³ Of special interest is the fact that the Trypillya figurines were made of clay which contained traces of wheat grains,¹⁴ signifying that the fertility cult of the hunters had been transplanted and transformed to fit an agricultural environment. One may assume that the concept of the Mother-goddess of the hunters also underwent a change and that the object of worship in the agricultural cult of fertility became the earth, in the form of an Earth-mother. In addition to female figurines, several male figurines and numerous statuettes of bulls, rams, and other male domestic animals were found.¹⁵ The presence of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations of the male element in conjunction with an agricultural cultus signifies the creation, in primitive man's religious concepts, of a consort for the Earth-goddess.¹⁶ Judging by the quantity of these symbolic representations found in the Trypillya sites, one may infer that the male element had already occupied a prominent position in the cultus. In all probability the consort of the earth in his role of procreator was associated with the sky, most probably with the natural phenomena of rain and sunshine which are essential for vegetation.¹⁷

The recent discovery of a decorated bone axe-head of the late Trypillya period in the village of Dudarky, near Kiev, provides an additional source of information about the religious beliefs of the time.¹⁸ The axe-head, which is believed to be approximately four thousand years old, is carved with many symbolic signs and zoomorphic and anthropomorphic

images. On one of its sides appear a palm tree, a deer, dogs or wolves, and a boar — all of which are orientated towards the butt-end of the axe. This part of the axe is decorated with a hanging-triangle motif; below it stands the figure of a horse facing the animals. The opposite side of the axe-head is said to have contained, in its center the images of a man and a woman holding hands. The man was drawn against a background of a solar disk and the hanging-triangle motif, while the woman against a background of a tree; above the couple hovered a bird, to which the man pointed with his free hand.

From the schematic representations carved on the axe-head several conclusions may be drawn about the religious beliefs of the Trypillya culture. Assuming that the images of the man and the woman represent divine beings in anthropomorphic form, one may deduce that the symbols associated with them provide clues to their functions. One may infer, that the male deity, since he is associated with solar signs, represents the Sun-god; likewise that the female deity, who is associated with the image of a tree, represents a goddess of vegetation — in all probability the Earth-goddess.¹⁹ The fact that the Sun-god and the Earth-goddess are portrayed as holding hands may mean that the Sun-god in the agricultural cultus had been elevated to a position of equal importance with the Earth-goddess, and that the two were conceived as a "divine couple". The figure of the bird, represented as hovering above the divine couple, is, however, a rather mysterious symbol. The fact that the Sun-god is in an attentive attitude before it denotes that the bird occupied an important position in the religion of Trypillya. It may be that it was a symbol of the original Sky-god who, with the development of higher religious concepts, had undergone a process of disassociation of his original functions and was

replaced as the male element in the agricultural cult by the Sun-god.²⁰ As for the hanging-triangle motif, it is believed to represent solar rays and to symbolize the warmth and the life-giving qualities of the sun;²¹ consequently, the fact that the images of most of the animals, as well as of the tree, are orientated towards the symbolic representation of solar rays in all probability indicates the veneration of the sun by the whole of nature, faunal and floral. Although the image of the tree was probably used to symbolize vegetation in general, one may infer that there also existed in the Trypillya religion a cult of the "sacred tree" which developed under the influence of the Near Eastern concept of the "tree of life".²² As for the figure of the horse, due to its opposite orientation and proximity to the solar symbols, it probably signifies the veneration of the horse as the sacred animal of the sun. It is impossible to determine whether or not the other animals represented were at that time also associated with separate cults, since their images are not accompanied by any distinctive signs or symbols.

In the excavation of Trypillya sites, archeologists also discovered tiny model houses of clay containing miniature urns, originally believed to have enclosed human ashes.²³ If this is the case, the model houses would imply the existence of an advanced cult of ancestor-worship in the religion of Trypillya; the model houses probably represented family shrines in which the remains of ancestors were preserved. The fact that some of the model houses also contained tiny female figurines, found in a sitting position among the urns, reflects an associated belief in tutelary spirits.²⁴ Since the representations of the ancestral protector-spirits occur in feminine form, one may conjecture that the Trypillya society was organized along matriarchal lines. From the preservation of

the ancestors' ashes one may deduce that the predominant way of desposing of the dead in the Eneolithic Era was cremation, although evidence of inhumation is also found.²⁵ The custom of cremating the dead usually accompanies the development of new concepts of after-life when the abode of the dead becomes associated with the sky, particularly with the heavenly bodies.²⁶

There is reason to believe that the Trypillya population also practiced sacrifice; zoomorphically shaped and artistically decorated vessels, which usually appear in the shape of bulls and rams, were found in many sites, and these probably represent articles of ritual used during blood-sacrifices and other sacred libations.²⁷ Furthermore, discoveries of child-burial under the floors of houses seem to indicate the practice of foundation sacrifices.²⁸ Such offerings were apparently carried out during the construction of new homes, but whether they were designed to propitiate the animistically conceived soul or spirit of the house, or to provide the new home with its own tutelary spirit, remains uncertain.²⁹

The occurrence of similar cult objects and burial practices over a large territory shows that the Trypillya culture achieved a relatively high degree of religious uniformity. Furthermore, the presence of a well-developed cult of ancestor-worship, the representation of major deities in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic form, and the practice of sacrifice in the worship of these deities attest that the Trypillya religion had achieved an advanced stage of development.

Religion of the pastoral peoples. At the same time as the Trypillya culture there existed in the Kuban, pre-Pontic, and pre-Caspian steppes a society of semi-nomadic, pastoral peoples.³⁰ At the beginning of the second millennium B.C. this group, believed to be the

Indo-Europeans, began an enormous territorial expansion, occupying, by 1500 B.C., most of Europe, the Near East, and India.³¹ Characterized by an aggressive nature, a patriarchal society, a strong political organization, and a practical language, the Indo-European pastoral race conquered and assimilated the aboriginal cultures in their sweep across Europe.³² In the conquest of the Trypillya culture many achievements of the agricultural civilization were destroyed; its surviving elements later merged with the new pastoral culture to form the cultural heritage of the Eastern Slavs.³³ These remnants of that ancient agricultural civilization, which are particularly well preserved in the culture of Ukraine,³⁴ appear mostly in the spheres of folk-artistry and religious beliefs — areas which are noted for their conservatism and resistance to change.

Archeologically, the uniformity of the pastoral culture has not been sufficiently proved, and the Indo-Europeans are associated both with the higher Catacomb Burial culture³⁵ and with the less-developed Kurgan or Barrow Burial culture.³⁶ The burial customs of both cultures are characterized by the use of red ochre and the placing of the deceased in a contracted position.³⁷ The more complicated burial mounds of the Catacomb culture, however, are characterized by distinctive structural features — curious rock formations and pillars in, on, and around the graves.³⁸ The rock pillars found on top of the mounds are known as kamyani baby³⁹ or menhirs, and are decorated with crudely anthropomorphic features. Stone slabs placed in the graves above the deceased are known as stellae, and are characterized by schematic representations of men holding weapons. Cromlechs or large circles of boulders, and labyrinths, which appear as fantastic and intricate rock arrangements, surround the

burial mounds and cover the adjacent area. The study of these unusual stone relics of the past provides us with clues to the religious beliefs of the pastoral peoples. Schematic representations of human figures on the menhirs and stellae represent, in all probability, monuments to deceased warriors; these are undoubtedly signs of ancestor-worship. Moreover, ashes and animal bones which were discovered in the mounds⁴⁰ provide evidence of the use of sacrificial fire and the observance of funeral feasts in honour of the deceased.⁴¹ As for the cromlechs surrounding the mounds, the fact that the entrances always face the east probably denotes that they were used in a complicated system of rites and ceremonies associated with the worship of the sun and other heavenly bodies. The labyrinths of rock, which sometimes occupy very large areas, undoubtedly are also related to what appears to have been a combined cult of ancestor- and sky-worship.⁴² Many of the graves also contain schematic representations of horses and stylized bulls' horns, features which undoubtedly denote the sacred nature of these animals.⁴³ It is very probable that the bull cult was very highly developed among the pastorals, the bull being a mainstay of a cattle-breeding economy. Somewhat later burials of the Catacomb and Kurgan cultures are characterized by the early Indo-European feature of interring with the deceased his belongings, animals, servants, and wives.⁴⁴ In all probability the human victims were put to death to accompany the deceased into after-life and to supply him with all the comforts of the life he enjoyed on earth.

From the study of archeological remains of the pastoral cultures on the territory of the Eastern Slavs, one may infer that these people worshipped the sky, as manifested by its natural phenomena and the heavenly bodies; that they venerated certain animals, notably the bull and

the horse; and that they practiced a cult of ancestor-worship which was characterized by elaborate funeral sacrifices and memorial feasts.

The union of the surviving elements of the agricultural Trypillya religion with the domineering elements of the pastoral, Indo-European religion formed the foundation on which the later mythology of Kievan Rus' developed. At the core of the resultant religious system lay the common Indo-European feature of sky-worship.⁴⁵ In the course of time the vague Indo-European Sky-god became departmentalized according to the functions of his various manifestations, which then became personified by new major deities.⁴⁶ The position of primacy in the later pantheon was taken over by a deity whose functions typified the aggressive character of the conquering Indo-Europeans, the god of thunder and lightning.⁴⁷ Of the major deities in the Trypillya religion only the Sun-god appears to have retained a position of importance in the new mythology, being included into the new pantheon. As for the Earth-goddess, the other member of the original "divine couple", she appears to have faded in importance before the male gods of the patriarchal society, being relegated to a position of secondary importance in the cult of vegetation; herein she was preserved in the vague, impersonal function of Mother Earth. Features which were common to both the Trypillya and Indo-European religions, such as the cults of ancestor-worship and nature-worship, continued to prevail as the real objects of the popular cultus, both in the later mythology and in the post-Christian folklore.

II. FOREIGN INFLUENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RUS' MYTHOLOGY

In the period beginning with the last half of the second millennium A.D., the ancestors of the Eastern Slavs developed in an environment

of continually changing cultural influences. This period witnessed an almost endless procession of nomadic tribes surging in from the east across the pre-Caspian and pre-Pontic steppes, temporarily subduing the local populations, and then vanishing under the onslaught of fresh hordes from Asia. One might expect that these invading cultures, particularly those which exercised their influence for long periods of time, would leave their traces on the culture of the Eastern Slavs. In addition to the influences of the invading nomadic cultures, the early Slavs were also subject to cultural influences from their European neighbors, particularly the Hellenic civilization in the south. To distinguish with any degree of certainty the foreign elements in the Slavic mythology, however, is a very difficult problem, since most of the borrowed features have been deeply incrustated over the ages with typically Slavic and Christian elements. The author's intention is to present merely a brief survey of the foreign cultures affecting the Slavs, limiting his conjectures as to the foreign influences on Rus' mythology to such cases where the similarities in religious beliefs and customs are particularly apparent.

The Cimmerians. The Cimmerians, a semi-nomadic, pastoral people of Iranian origin, appeared in the Kuban and pre-Pontic steppes at about the twelfth century B.C..⁴⁸ In history they are renowned for their military expeditions against the centers of civilization in Mesopotamia, and so in their far-ranging military campaigns these people may have served as vehicles for the dissemination of the Near Eastern culture among the early Slavs.⁴⁹ Since much of the Old Slavic religious terminology appears to be closely related to Iranian words and concepts, it may be assumed that it contains many borrowings from the Iranian

religion. To say with certainty at what stage of the development of Slavic mythology these borrowings occurred is difficult, but one may conjecture that those pertaining to basic concepts were adopted fairly early, in all probability through the Cimmerians. Presumably the early borrowings from the Iranian religion included the following words and their associated concepts: bog, from the Iranian bagha, meaning "wealth", and therefore designating God as the "giver of wealth"; nebo, from the Iranian nabhas, meaning "cloud", but used to designate the "sky" or "heavens"; as well as vatra (fire), mogila (burial mound), and chasha (chalice).⁵⁰

The Scythians. The Scythians occupied the pre-Caspian and pre-Pontic steppes from the eighth to the second centuries B.C.; they are believed to represent a backwash of the Indo-Iranian group mixed with Mongoloid elements.⁵¹ The religious beliefs of the Scythians, as recorded by Herodotus, center upon the cults of the sky, earth, and fire.⁵² All three features are also found in the Slavic mythology and, except for the Earth-goddess, appear common to most Indo-European peoples. The worship of an Earth-goddess is a feature to all appearances borrowed from an agricultural religion, probably from the Slavs. Herodotus also mentions that the Scythians worshipped a "naked sword", which they erected on large mounds, offering human sacrifices to it and bathing it in blood libations. Weapon-worship, perhaps as a symbol of the War-god, was also common to the later Eastern Slavs, according to the peace treaty of Knyaz' Ihor with Byzantium.⁵³ In addition, there exists much similarity between the funeral customs of the Scythians and those practiced in later Kievan Rus', particularly in the elaborate grave inventory and the exaggerated mourning techniques.⁵⁴

The Greeks. At the beginning of the eighth century B.C., Greeks from Asia Minor and Greece proper began to colonize the north shores of the Black Sea. Among the cities that they built were such important trading-centers as Bosphorus, Tiros, Olbia, Khersones, Tanais, and Panticapaeum — cities which later developed into veritable showplaces of Hellenic civilization.⁵⁵ These trading-centers established close commercial relations with the local Slavic population and were responsible for the dissemination of numerous elements of the Greek classical culture among these peoples; consequently, many of the similarities in the Slavic and Hellenic mythologies may be attributed to the cultural interchange that took place in the Greek trading-centers.

The Celts. The Celts are believed to have been the south-western neighbors of the Eastern Slavs from about the fifth century B.C. to the beginning of our era.⁵⁶ A comparison of Slavic and Celtic mythologies gives reason to believe that the cultural interchange between the two groups may have been very extensive. In both mythologies nature-worship and the associated cult of Mother Earth, as well as the veneration of numerous tutelary spirits, appear as dominant features.⁵⁷ The Celtic cult of Mother Earth, as reflected in the worship of Sirona, an ancient Earth-goddess, appears strikingly similar to the Slavic cult of Mati-Syra-Zemlya. Other noteworthy similarities occur in the names and functions of the following deities: the Celtic Berecynthia (a goddess of fertility) and the Slavic Beregynya (believed to have been a protector-spirit); the Celtic god of thunder Taran and the obscure Slavic deity Trayan; the Celtic swine-god Moccus and the uncertain Slavic deity Mokosh; the Celtic god of agriculture Dagda (meaning "the good-god") and the Slavic Dazhbog, sometime also found as Dabog, (meaning "the giver

of wealth"); and the Celtic gods Belenos (a sun-god) and Cernunnos (the god of the underworld), as compared with the vague Slavic deities Belobog and Chernobog.⁵⁸ But although it might prove extremely interesting to analyze the direction of the borrowings, such an extensive study is not within the scope of the present work.

The Sarmatians. The Sarmatians, who are also believed to have been members of the Iranian group, invaded the pre-Pontic steppes in the second century B.C., and continued to exert their influences over the local population until the first century A.D..⁵⁹ The feature that distinguished the Sarmatians from the preceding pastoral tribes was the position of social equality occupied by their women, who were renowned warriors. It is no wonder therefore that in the religious beliefs of the Sarmatians a goddess, usually represented as flanked by two mounted horsemen, appears as the main deity. A similar goddess, as witnessed by the numerous representations of it in the embroidery and wood-carving designs, was also very popular among the Eastern Slavs.⁶⁰ Other prominent features of the Sarmatian religion which were also evidenced in Slavic beliefs were the cult of sacrificial fire and the worship of the sacred sword.⁶¹ The following Slavic words, believed to be Iranian loan-words, can perhaps be attributed to the Sarmatians: vera (meaning "faith", in the sense of a choice between good and evil), mir (meaning "peace" or "community" and probably derived from the Zoroastrian major deity Mithra), kayati se (to chastise), vina (guilt), zlo (evil), and rai (paradise).⁶²

The Romans. Roman cultural influences began to appear in the territory of the Eastern Slavs as early as the first century A.D..⁶³ At this time, the Greek city-states on the Pontic shores that had survived the invasions of the nomads became affiliated to the Roman Empire, and therefore

subject to the cultural influences of the Roman civilization. The influence of Roman culture on the Eastern Slavs appears also to have radiated from another area — the frontier lands of the Roman Empire in the Danube River area. In the sphere of religion the evidence of Roman influence on beliefs and customs of the Eastern Slavs, however, appears to be insignificant, limited perhaps to the disputable derivations of the Slavic names for two ancient feasts — Kolyada, from "calendae", and Rusalya from "rosalia".⁶⁴

Miscellaneous contributions. In the period from the fourth to the seventh centuries A.D., the Antes, who are believed to be the direct ancestors of the later founders of Kievan Rus',⁶⁵ were exposed in rapid succession to influences from several foreign cultures, namely — the Goths, the Alans, the Huns, the Bolgars, and the Avars.⁶⁶ However, due to the fact that the passage of these hordes across the territory of the Antes was of short duration and assumed a violent nature, it is doubtful whether these people had much influence on the religious beliefs of the Antes. With the rise to power in the seventh century of the Khazar State on the Volga River, the Antes were exposed to the beliefs of still another religious system, namely Judaism.⁶⁷ It is possible that some Judaic beliefs and customs may have been also incorporated into the Rus' mythology, but these are not readily discernable. The arrival of the Vikings or Varangians in the Kievan State in the ninth and tenth centuries exposed the religious beliefs of the Eastern Slavs to still another foreign influence. However, the fact that the Vikings were quickly absorbed and assimilated by the native Slavic population, suggests that their effect on the Slavic mythology cannot have been great;⁶⁸ in all probability the Viking influence affected only the upper classes of the population, so that with the

adoption of Christianity by the state these Scandinavian elements disappeared without leaving any impression on the beliefs and customs of the lower classes. Finally, one should mention the Lithuanian and Finnic peoples, who lived to the north of the Eastern Slavs. With the former, as is evidenced by the enormous amount of linguistic similarity, the Slavs had a great deal of cultural intermingling; consequently certain beliefs and customs are common to both mythologies. As for the Finnic influences, although these are not readily perceptible, certain features of the Rus' mythology, such as the bear cult and its associated totemistic beliefs, and the Shaman-like characteristics of the volkhvy appear to be of Finnic origin. These influences will be dealt with individually as they are encountered in subsequent chapters.

From this brief review of the multiformity of the foreign cultures which came into contact with the early Slavs one may obtain a clearer perspective of the cultural development of the Eastern Slavs and the multitude of alien influences which acted upon it. For a correct interpretation of the meaning and significance of the ambiguous features in the mythology of Kievan Rus' a knowledge of the alien religious systems with which it came into contact is almost indispensable. The adoption of foreign religious concepts was accompanied in almost all cases by their modification to suit the Slavic temperament. This incrustation of alien elements with Slavic features tends to obscure their original meanings, often rendering them unexplainable in terms of Slavic cultural development alone; hence their study in the light of the information known about the religions from which they may have been adopted contributes to the understanding of the Rus' mythology.

III. RELIGION OF THE ANTES

Before engaging in an extensive analysis of Kievan Rus' mythology, it is also necessary to review the archeological and historical evidence of the religion of the Antes — the direct ancestors of the founders of the Kievan State.⁶⁹ Ethnically, the Antes represent the descendants of the proto-Slavic tribes with some admixtures of Iranian elements from the nomadic steppe-population. In archeology the Antes are associated with the Zarubnyts'ka and Chernyakhivs'ka cultures, which are found in the territories of central and south-western Ukraine from the second century B.C. to about the sixth century A.D..⁷⁰ In historical records the Antes appear as warlike tribes, renowned for their raids on the eastern borders of the Roman and Byzantine Empires.⁷¹ A study of these source-materials provides evidence for the belief that the Antes were the first of the Eastern Slavs to possess strong political organizations; they appear to have bonded together in tribal unions governed by democratic assemblies and hereditary kings.⁷² One might expect that under these social conditions the form of their religious beliefs and customs would tend to become standardized over large areas. In all probability this would lead to the creation of a polytheistic religious system and the development of cults and ritual ceremonies centered upon the worship of tribal pantheons of deities.

Most of the information about the religious beliefs and customs of the Antes is obtained from the study of the archeological relics of their culture. In the excavation of Antic settlements archeologists have discovered that their burial grounds were characterized by urn graves containing ashes and half-burnt human bones.⁷³ Accordingly, one

may conclude that the popular method of disposal of the dead among the Antes was cremation, and that this practice was a relic of an earlier, possibly Trypillya, rite. Whether the deceased was accompanied by his belongings, slaves, and wives on the funeral pyre is impossible to deduce from the available evidence. However, one may assume that by this time the Antes were already familiar with the Iranian concept of paradise, and that they associated the after-life with a heavenly abode of the dead, in all probability resembling the later Rus' rai.⁷⁴ An integral part of the burial customs associated with the cult of ancestors was the early Slavic practice of holding funeral feasts in honour of the deceased, following the burial ceremony; these were called strava by the Antes.⁷⁵ Whether or not these resembled the later Kievan tryzna in their ceremonial content — songs, dances, games and mock-battles — is impossible to ascertain, owing to the paucity of the source-material.

Among the excavated articles belonging to the Antes are many objects decorated with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic designs, which undoubtedly were associated with the prevailing religious beliefs. The most popular of the designs was the image of a woman with raised hands flanked on either side by mounted horsemen — to all appearance resembling the Great Goddess of the Sarmatians. It is uncertain what the main functions of this goddess were, but one may surmise from the mounted horsemen, who certainly represent warriors, that one of her functions may have been that of a Warrior-goddess or a patron deity in a martial cult. It is very likely that the cult of the Great Goddess among the Antes also preserved and incorporated within it the ancient agricultural functions of the Trypillya Earth-goddess. Of the other stylized human images, the most interesting are tiny, silver statuettes of men.⁷⁶ In

all probability these statuettes represent fetishes or amulets of major deities; as such they were apparently worn or carried around by their worshipers for protection against evil spirits.⁷⁷ In addition to the above-mentioned objects, the settlements of the Antes contain numerous iron implements and weapons, which bear witness to a well-established metallurgic industry among the population. On the basis of this evidence, one may suggest that the Antes were also familiar with the concept of a "divine blacksmith", and therefore, that they venerated the patron deity of this craft.⁷⁸

The discovery in the village of Ivankivtsi, in eastern Podillya, of three large stone statues⁷⁹ played an important role in the study and evaluation of early Slavic cultures, particularly the culture of the Antes. The statues, which appear in crudely anthropomorphic form, are characterized by the later typically Slavic feature of many heads; they undoubtedly represent the idols of the major deities worshipped by the Antes. In another discovery of an Antic site, on the Blahovishchens'ka hill near the town of Vshchyzh, Soviet archeologists recently uncovered the remains of an even more elaborate cult-center.⁸⁰ Excavations of this sacred place revealed the foundations of a large horseshoe-shaped building and the remnants of several huge wooden pillars, arranged in a semicircular position.⁸¹ At the foot of the pillars were found vessels of pottery and, somewhat further away, the remains of an enormous bonfire. From this archeological material it is possible to reconstruct the general appearance of the sacred site. The large building, because of its unusual shape and its great size, to all appearance represented some sort of sacred meeting place or temple. The huge wooden pillars were probably anthropomorphically represented idols

of the tribal gods. As for the vessels of pottery, these probably contained food offerings brought forth by individual worshipers to propitiate the gods and gain their favours and help. Furthermore, the large bonfire probably represents the remains of elaborate communal worship, to all appearances accompanied by sacrifices. It may be correct to conjecture that the communal worship was led by some sort of priests who directed the ceremonies, performed the sacrifices, and acted as the mediators between the people and their gods.

In addition to the information provided by archeology, the basic elements of the religious beliefs of the Antes were attested by the sixth century Byzantine historian Procopius, who wrote:

They worship one god whom they conceive to be the creator of thunder and the maker of all things; to him they sacrifice cattle and other victims.... Moreover, they venerate rivers, nymphs, and other spirits, and sacrifice to them all; from these sacrifices they divine the future.⁸²

From Procopius' statement it is tempting to infer that the supreme deity of the Antes was the same as the later Kievan Rus' main divinity Perun.⁸³ One must be extremely cautious of making any such conjecture, however, as the similarity in the attributes and functions of the two deities does not necessarily denote identity. According to Procopius, the supreme deity of the Antes was not merely the god of thunder, but rather "the maker of all things", whose omnipotence manifested itself in the natural phenomenon of thunder. As such, the supreme god of the Antes apparently represented the all-powerful Sky-god,⁸⁴ and resembled in his functions the Greek god Zeus and the Iranian supreme deity Varuna. The Kievan supreme god Perun, on the other hand, appeared as a warlike god of thunder and lightning; in this function he resembled the Scandinavian god Thor. Hence the identification of the supreme deity of the Antes

with the head of the pantheon of the Kievan State is rather hazardous; the "maker of all things" in the religion of the Antes appears to incorporate the attributes of the original Indo-European supreme deity, the Sky-god, and as such probably denotes Svaroh.⁸⁵

The other elements of the Antes' mythology mentioned by Procopius — the veneration of rivers, nymphs, and other spirits; their propitiation by sacrifice; and the divination of future events — also form the core of later Kievan Rus' mythology. It is interesting to note that the rather primitive animistic feature of nature-worship already in the religion of the Antes had acquired such advanced concepts as the veneration of individualized nature-spirits and the practice of sacrifice designed to propitiate, control, and predispose these in the worshiper's favour.

FOOTNOTES

1. The sources used in the survey of archeological attestations of prehistoric religious beliefs include the following: Akademiya Nauk Ukrayins'koyi R.S.R., Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi Ukrayins'koyi R.S.R. (Kiev, 1957), pp. 9-108; A.Mongait, Archeology in the U.S.S.R. (Moscow, 1959), pp. 61-150; and Y.Pasternak, Arkeolohiya Ukrayiny (Toronto, 1961), pp. 34-263.

2. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 58-61; Mongait, op. cit., pp. 78-81. D.Ya.Telegin, "Novi dani pro lyudynu kamyanooho viku na Ukrayini," Visnyk A.N. U.R.S.R. (Kiev, 1957), no.4, p.54, believes that the inhabitants of this site were the earliest ancestors of the Eastern and Southern Slavic tribes.

3. Red ochre burials are found in Paleolithic sites throughout Europe. See G.-H.Luquet, "Prehistoric Mythology," Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (New York, 1959), pp. 4-6.

4. Similar figurines were also found in Paleolithic sites throughout Europe. See E.O.James, Prehistoric Religion (London, 1957), pp. 145-148. James dates the beginning of the cult of fertility figurines at approximately 70,000 B.C., Ibid., p. 291.

5. See Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

6. Although totemistic beliefs among the Slavs, as among all the Indo-European people, are very rare, traces of ancient totem worship are nevertheless detectable in Ukrainian and White Russian marriage ceremonies. See N.M.Nikol'skiy, Proiskhozhdenie i istoriya belorusskoy svadebnoy obryadnosti (Minsk, 1956), pp. 95-143.

7. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 88-89, 92.

8. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi Ukrayins'koyi R.S.R., pp. 33-34.

9. For a discussion of the burial practises which display precautionary measures against the return of corpses, see J.Maringer, The Gods of Prehistoric Man (New York, 1960), pp. 74-78.

10. Cases of precautionary corpse-mutilation are often encountered in the burial practises of the Slavs; these are associated with beliefs in the upyri, vovkulaky, and wid'my. See section on Demonology, below.

11. For an extensive analysis of the Trypillya culture see: Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 112-224; Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 54-72; and Mongait, op. cit., pp. 107-115.

12. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 141-143.

13. On Near Eastern female figurines see: James, op. cit., pp. 153-157; also V.G.Childe, The Aryans (New York, 1926), p. 186.

14. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, p. 59.

15. Pasternak, op. cit., p. 144.

16. James, op. cit., pp. 166, 239.

17. For a study of the development of the Sky-father, and his functions in the vegetation cultus, see James, op. cit., pp. 225-226.

18. A.Ishchuk, "Zahadka Dudarkivs'koyi sokyry," Literaturna Ukrayina (Kiev, February 1, 1963), p.4. Also, E.Binyashevs'kyi, "Arhument starodavnikh khudozhnykiv," Ukrayina (Kiev, January, 1963), p.23.

19. For a discussion of the various symbols and signs associated with deities, see J. Maringer, op. cit., pp. 240-244. Also H. Kühn, The Rock Pictures of Europe (London, 1956), pp. 217-227.

20. It should be noted that the above conjecture draws attention to the case of the god Horus in the Egyptian mythology. He, too, originally represented the god of the sky and had as his sacred bird

and symbol a falcon. In time his position of primacy was taken over by the Sun-god Re. See, "Egyptian Mythology," Larouse Encyc. of Myth., pp. 12-13, 21; also James, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

21. Ishchuk, op. cit.

22. On the cult of sacred trees see, The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, J.Hastings ed., (Edinburg, 1927), XII, pp. 454-455.

23. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 128-132.

24. The belief in tutelary spirits became an important element in the religion of the later Slavs. See section on Demonology, below.

25. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, p. 63.

26. James, op. cit., p. 133.

27. Pasternak, op. cit., p. 144.

28. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, p. 63.

29. In the customs of the Eastern Slavs one sees evidence of such sacrificial offerings; food and money were often buried under newly constructed homes, likely to pacify and propitiate the "soul" of the house for the disturbance. Also found are ritual slayings of fowl which were buried under the floor of the house. The latter rite resembles the Trypillya child-burial custom; however, human sacrifice, in the course of time, appears to have been replaced by the less cruel practice of animal sacrifice. See section on Domovyk, below.

30. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 73-85; also, Childe, op. cit., p. 183.

31. M.Gimbutas, "Culture Change in Europe at the Start of the Second Millennium B.C.: A contribution to the Indo-European Problem," Selected Papers of the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, A.Wallace ed., (Philadelphia, 1960), pp. 540-553. Also see Childe, op. cit., pp. 183-207.

32. Gimbutas, op. cit., pp. 542-544.

33. Ibid., p. 551.

34. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 537-540.

35. M.Miller, "Arkheolohiya," Entsyklopediya Ukrayinoznavstva, V.Kubiyovych and Z.Kuzelya eds., (New York, 1949), p. 333.

36. Childe, op. cit., p. 194; Gimbutas op. cit., pp. 542-543.

37. See Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 169-173.

38. Ibid., pp. 287-288.

39. For a discussion of these, see the article by M. Miller, "Kamyani baby," Novi Dni, (Toronto, July-August, 1953), pp. 15-18.

40. Pasternak, op. cit., p. 287.

41. Remnants of sacrificial fires and animal bones in the grave mounds appear to signify the observance of early forms of funeral feasts, associated with the cult of ancestors. In the later-day Kievan Rus' these were called tryzna feasts and were accompanied by singing and games. See M. Hrushevsky, Istoriya Ukrayiny-Rusy (New York), I, p. 336.

42. Menhirs, cromlechs, and stone labyrinths are commonly found throughout Europe; they are perhaps best represented in the Stonehenge constructions in England. For a discussion of these objects and their relationship to the cult of the dead and sky-worship, see Maringer, op. cit., pp. 227-239.

43. Pasternak, op. cit., p. 218.

44. See Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 82-83; Pasternak, op. cit., p. 241.

45. On Indo-European mythology, see O. Schrader, "Aryan Religion," The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, pp. 11-57. In this article Schrader attempts to recreate the common Indo-European mythology on the basis of comparative mythology. He succeeds in proving that the religious features of sky-worship, (later personified by a god of thunder), ancestor-worship (characterized by numerous memorial feasts) and animistic nature-worship were common, in a greater or lesser degree, to all Indo-European peoples, and therefore that these features reflect the basic elements of the original common Indo-European mythology.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. For an analysis of the archeological remnants of the Cimmerians see: Y. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 250-256; also Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 109-114.

49. On historic records of the Cimmerians, see M. Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 106-108.

50. From F. Dvornik, The Slavs, their Early History and Civilization (Boston, 1956), pp. 48, 50-51.

51. G. Vernadsky, Ancient Russia (New Haven, 1952), p. 51.

52. For an analysis of Herodotus' description of Scythian religious beliefs, see Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 113-115.

53. Povest' vremennykh let, V.Adrianova-Peretts ed., (Moscow, 1950), I, p.25. See section on Svaroh, below.

54. For a detailed archeological analysis of the Scythian burial mounds, see Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 315-341, and Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 161-173.

55. Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 372-413; Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 243-312; and A.Mongait, op. cit., pp. 185-219.

56. Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 137-138.

57. On Celtic mythology, see T.A.MacCulloch, "Celtic Religion," The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, III, pp. 277-304.

58. Ibid., pp. 277-296.

59. On Sarmatians, see, Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 218-241.

60. See L.A.Dintses, "Drevnie cherty v russkom narodnom iskusstve," Istoriya kultury Drevney Rusi (Moscow, 1951), II, pp. 468-477.

61. Ibid., p. 235.

62. From R.Jakobson, "Slavic Mythology," Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, II, p. 1025.

63. See Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 476-487, 499-507.

64. See sections on Yearly Feasts and Rusalky, below.

65. Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 177.

66. Ibid., pp. 150-161.

67. Ibid., pp. 100-101.

68. See S.A.Tokarev, Etnografiya narodov S.S.S.R., (Moscow, 1958), p. 23.

69. On the ethnic origin of the Antes and their relationship to later Kievan Rus', see: M.Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 171-179; L.Niederle, Slavyanskije drevnosti (Moscow, 1956), pp. 139-141; and B.D.Grekov, Kiev Rūs (Moscow, 1959), pp. 495-567.

70. For a discussion of the archeologically evidenced cultures associated with the Antes, see: Y.Pasternak, op. cit., pp. 453-464; Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 322-331; and A.Mongait, op. cit., pp. 315-320.

71. Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 168.

72. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, pp. 343-346.

73. Pasternak, op. cit., p. 461.

74. The paradise, rai, as visualized by the inhabitants of Rus', according to Ibn-Fadlan, is discussed in the section on Burial Customs, below.

75. The first historic record of this Slavic custom is preserved in Jordanis's description of Attila's funeral. According to Jordanis, the funeral of this Hunnic chief was followed by a ritual banquet called strava, which was attended by all his chiefs and warriors, including probably large contingents of Slavs. Jordanis, Romana et Getica, section 258, from G. Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia (Oxford, 1959), p. 74.

76. Ibid. pp. 336, 348. Note that these statuettes represent men without beards, with long mustashes, and wearing embroidered shirts. M. Miller, "Pohans'ki bohy v Ukrayini," Novi Dni (Toronto, October, 1957), pp. 17-19, points to the similarity in appearance between these sixth century figurines and a twelfth century Kievan representation of a huslyar. Miller believes that the embroidery techniques in Ukrainian costumes and the traditional custom of shaving beards and growing long mustashes date back to the early sixth century A.D.. Similar views are also expressed by Grekov, op. cit., p. 507.

77. Miller, op. cit., p. 17, feels that these statuettes are fetishes of a tutelary spirit associated with the cult of ancestors. He proposes that the name of this divinity was Tsur, and that the small idols of it were called tsurpalka or tsurka. It is interesting to note that a Ukrainian exorcism "tsur tobi" still means "away with thee," according to B.D.Hrinchenko, Slovar ukrayins'koyi movy (Kiev, 1909), IV, p. 437.

78. The cult of the "divine blacksmith" is found in most Indo-European and Near Eastern mythologies. See, G.Jobes, Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore, and Symbols (New York, 1961), II, p. 1468. In the post-Christian period the Eastern Slavs had not just one, but two patron saints for the blacksmith profession; this reflects the extraordinary importance of the craft. Undoubtedly the pre-Christian Slavs also venerated a "divine blacksmith" who was probably introduced by the Cimmerians.

79. Pasternak, op. cit., p. 512. In connection with the early idols of the Antes (dated in the third century A.D.), it is interesting to note that the earliest existence of Germanic idols is traced to the Eastern Goths in the second half of the fourth century A.D.; see, The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, op. cit., VII, p. 156. This date corresponds directly to the period of Gothic migrations through the territories of the Eastern Slavs. It may be, therefore, that the Goths adopted the concept of idol-worship from the Antes.

80. Narysy starodavn'oyi istoriyi, p. 346.

81. Ibid.

82. Procopius, "De Bell. Got. III, 14," according to The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XI, p. 593.

83. This inference was made by Niederle, op. cit., p. 277; by Grekov, op. cit., p. 514; and by Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 317.

84. The association of the concept of "the maker of all things" with the Sky-god is almost universal. For a discussion, see E.O.James, Prehistoric Religion pp. 204-228.

85. For a discussion of Svaroh see section on Major Deities, below.

CHAPTER III

THE MAJOR DEITIES IN RUS' MYTHOLOGY

The appearance of Kievan Rus' as a powerful political state is dated by historians at the beginning of the ninth century A.D.,¹ although evidence of Kiev as an important city and trading-center is found at a much earlier period. Most scholars date the foundation of Kiev in the sixth century,² but some propose that the city existed already in the second century A.D..³ As a political state, Kievan Rus' succeeded in subjugating and uniting under its control not only the various tribal unions and city-states of the Eastern Slavs, but also the different non-Slavic groups within its domains.⁴ The paramount role in the foundation of the state was played by the Polyany tribe, who were the inhabitants of Kiev and the adjacent territories. The descendants of the Slavic Antes, the Polyany formed the first dynasties of the Kievan State. It was only in the second half of the ninth century that the "foreign" Varangian rulers gained control of Kievan Rus'; but, as was noted above, they were rapidly assimilated by the Slavic population. As one would expect, in the realm of culture and more particularly in the sphere of Rus' mythology, the beliefs and customs of the antecedent, autochthonous, Slavic civilizations predominated.

Prior to Knyaz' Volodymyr's ascension of the Kievan throne, Rus' appears to have possessed no uniformly organized religious system; instead, the various tribes and subject city-states probably venerated, in addition to certain ill-defined common gods, local patron deities who were the objects of individual cults. The assumption of power by Volodymyr was followed by a series of major reforms in the political,

economic, and cultural spheres. To facilitate the process of unification of the various divergent tribal and ethnic elements into one nation, Volodymyr attempted to organize a national religious system by combining the various tribal deities into an official pantheon in Kiev. This pantheon included the following gods: Perun, Khors, Dazhboh, Stryboh, Semargl, and Mokosh.⁵ In the worship of these gods, idols were erected in Kiev and other cult centers; communal services, characterized by sacrifices and officiated over by the Knyaz' and the volkhvy were also performed.⁶

In addition to the major deities included in the official pantheon in Kiev, literary records and folklore have preserved the names of other gods who, for reasons unknown, were excluded from the pantheon. Among these, the various divinities preserved in the folklore cannot with any certainty be assumed to have existed as major deities in Rus' mythology. In many instances only their names are preserved in association with certain calendar festivities, such as Kupalo, Yarylo, and Kolyada; indeed, in some cases they were probably retained merely as personifications of natural manifestations, as in Vesna, Zemlya, Zorya, and Misyats'. Consequently conjectures as to whether they belonged to the major deities in Rus' mythology must be based almost entirely on their similarity to the major deities of foreign mythologies. In this chapter the author proposes to treat as Rus' major deities only those whose membership in this select group can be readily supported with ancient literary attestations.

SVAROH

There is good reason to propose that, in addition to the official godhead of the Kievan pantheon, Perun, Rus' mythology possessed a remote

supreme deity, a Sky-father, whose concept is readily traced back to the prehistoric religions. With the disassociation of his original functions, for each of which new deities were created, the supreme Sky-father became conceived as a universal creator and the source of all life. As such he appears to have been preserved in the nameless supreme deity of the Antes mentioned by Procopius; very probably this godhead occupied a similar, but perhaps somewhat more remote position in the mythology of Kievan Rus'.

It is difficult to say with complete certainty what the name of this deity was, for none of the ancient records actually mention his name together with his attributes or the description of his functions. The most likely choice for this position, but one that is almost entirely dependant on comparative mythology and philology in support of his claim, appears to be Svaroh (Svarog). In an interpolated passage to an early translation of the Malala Chronicle, Svaroh is identified with the Egyptian god Hephaistos,⁷ who is also known under the name of Ptah, the universal creator,³ and entitled the father of Dazhboh, the god of the sun. On the basis of this interpolation many scholars, including Niederle,⁹ Hrushevsky,¹⁰ and Derzhavin,¹¹ suggest that Svaroh was indeed the supreme deity of the Eastern Slavs. Niederle derives Svaroh's name from the Indo-European root svar, meaning "burning" or "bright", and therefore proposes that the name Svaroh originally meant "the shining one", an epithet of the god of the heavens.¹² A similar derivation of the god's name is maintained by Hrushevsky who deduces Svaroh's name from the Indic root svar, meaning "sky" or "solar light"; he explains the suffix -oh or -og as a derivative of the Indic suffix -ga, denoting the motions of the sky and its heavenly manifestations.¹³ It should be noted that the name Svarga actually exists in the later Vedic mythology, wherein it appears

as one of the epithets of the Sky-god.¹⁴

The identification of Svaroh with Hephaistos, who is regarded by the chronicler as the benefactor of mankind for revealing the secret of iron forging (particularly of weapons), and as the institutor of a new moral code, for encouraging the practice of monogamy, has prompted some scholars to propose that Svaroh also incorporated the attributes of a divine blacksmith and the founder and protector of family life.¹⁵ The association of Svaroh with the craft of smithery and especially with the art of forging weapons gives rise to a different etymological derivation of the god's name. For example, N.Lavrov derives Svaroh's name from the Old Slavonic root var, meaning "fire" or "heat", which is found in many Slavic words pertaining to smithing, such as svarit', svarshchik, and kovar.¹⁶ The close connection between Svaroh and the root var (fire) is furthermore supported by some early ecclesiastical sermons condemning the heathen survival of worshipping fire, which is referred to as Svarozhych or "the son of Svaroh".¹⁷ Nevertheless, it appears highly unlikely that the name of a deity would be derived from the object of the cult with which it was associated; instead, it is more probable that the name Svaroh had its origin in the early Indo-European name for sky, svar, and that the smithy terminology incorporating his name arose only at a much later period, when the Sky-god acquired the new attribute of a heavenly blacksmith.

It is interesting to note, in conjunction with Svaroh's epithet of the divine blacksmith, that the translator of the Malala Chronicle appears to have emphasized the god's association with the art of forging weapons. G.Vernadsky, on the basis of this association, proposes that weapons were conceived as the symbols of Svaroh.¹⁸ He points to

the wording of the oath in a treaty between Rus' and Byzantium in 907, wherein the Rus' warriors swore first by their weapons, and then by their gods Perun and Volos, to uphold the treaty's terms.¹⁹ The fact that the weapons precede the gods Perun and Volos Vernadsky interprets as indicative of their importance as symbols of the supreme deity Svaroh. A later Rus'-Byzantium treaty, in 944, provides further support for Vernadsky's conjecture. It reads:

May we have no help from God (*italics G.F.*) or from Perun; may our own shields fail to protect us; may we die from our own swords, arrows, and other weapons; and may we be slaves throughout after-life.²⁰

Here also the weapons, particularly the naked sword, appear very prominently in the wording of the oath, as does the nameless "God". Vernadsky concludes that Svaroh's name must have been taboo and that in oaths he was invoked either as "God" or symbolically through this emblem, the naked sword.²¹

In the function of the universal creator, Svaroh appears as the father of gods, as is evidenced in the patronymic term Svarozhychi (meaning "sons of Svaroh"). This epithet, according to old texts, was applied primarily to two Rus' deities — the gods of sun and fire; however, since it is also recorded in reference to the gods of the Baltic Slavs,²² one may surmise that the term Svarozhychi was likewise used in a broader sense, probably in reference to all major deities. Helmold's twelfth century description of the nameless, supreme deity of the Baltic Slavs appears to support such conjectures. He states:

They do not deny that there is among the multiform gods, to whom they attribute fields and woods, sorrows and joys, one god in heavens ruling over the others. They hold that he, the all powerful one, looks only after heavenly matters; that the others, discharging the duties assigned to them in obedience to him, proceed from his blood; and that one excels another in the measure that he is nearer to this god of gods.²³

It is interesting to note that the supreme deity of the Baltic Slavs appears strikingly similar to the nameless, all-powerful universal creator of the Antes, described by Procopius six centuries earlier. On the basis of the above material it seems correct to conclude that Svaroh was indeed the original Rus', perhaps even a common Slavic, supreme deity; and that the later major deities, as is evidenced by the patronymic epithet Svarozhychi, were conceived as his children.

It has been noted above that the supreme deity's name appears to have been taboo and that in invoking him the indefinite "God" or symbolic emblems were used. Examples of taboo associated with the name of a remote, supreme heavenly ruler are also found in other mythologies; the name of the godhead is either not used at all, in which case he is referred to either as the indefinite "He" or under some epithet or symbol, or it undergoes taboo transformations, where certain letters are changed to conceal the original name.²⁴ In Slavic mythology, the only evidence of taboo substitution or transformation of a god's name is restricted to Svaroh, thereby providing additional support for his claim to the title of supreme deity. One example of a taboo transformation in Svaroh's name is preserved in the Slavo-German border area where a mountain-range, the Kashubian Svarozhyn, is still often referred to by the native population as the Kashubian Tvarog or Tvarozhych.²⁵ Another example is the name of a Czech demon Rárog or Rárach;²⁶ he very probably retains the name of the original heathen supreme deity, who under Christian influences degenerated to the ranks of the lower demons. As for taboo substitutions, the most likely epithets which may have been used for Svaroh are Tur and Trojan.²⁷ The former epithet, attested by Nestor who speaks of Tur's kapishche (temple) in Kiev,²⁸ is undoubtedly

derived from the word tur (a "wild bull"), and represents the supreme deity's continued association with the bull cult — the bull being originally worshipped as the embodiment of the male element, and hence, as a symbol of the Sky-father.²⁹ The epithet Trojan, mentioned in the Lay of Ihor's Campaign as well as in several early chronicles, has been proposed by some scholars, including Niederle,³⁰ to denote the deified Roman emperor, Trajan. However, since there exists no evidence to believe that the Eastern Slavs practiced deification of their own kings, much less foreigners, this interpretation of Trojan is questionable. It is more probable, rather, that the name Trojan, as has been suggested by Vernadsky,³¹ was derived from the word try, meaning "three"; in Ukrainian, according to Hrinchenko's dictionary, the word troyan means "father of sons-triplets".³² Hence, to all appearance Trojan, as an epithet of Svaroh, was conceived as the father of a heavenly triad of gods, likely the Svarozhychi.³³ Similar heavenly triads are also found in other mythologies, the closest parallel to the Slavic one appearing in the Indian sacred triad Tridiva which, curiously enough, is also a synonym of Svarga, the Vedic heaven.³⁴

PERUN

Next in importance to Svaroh was the stern god Perun, personifying the common Indo-European feature of thunder-worship. He is first mentioned as a major deity in chronicles of the first half of the tenth century, being named by Nestor as one of the Kievan deities invoked in treaties with Byzantium.³⁵ Some scholars feel that the god Perun at that time represented merely the patron deity of the Rus' military class and that as such he was conceived, under the influence of the Varangians,

as a Warrior-god similar to the Scandinavian deity Thor.³⁶ With the creation of a national pantheon by Volodymyr in 980, Perun, as the patron deity of the ruling class, assumed the position of primacy in the state religion, and was considered the supreme deity in Rus' mythology.³⁷

In explaining the etymology of the name Perun, various derivations were proposed, but all of these are connected by a common denominator — the association of the god's name with the natural phenomenon of thunder and lightning. Some scholars identified Perun with the Vedic Thunder-god Indra, and derived his name from the Sanskrit root par, as found in Indra's epithet Parjanya-parganya denoting a furious thunderstorm.³⁸ On the basis of this derivation, they suggested that both the Slavic Perun and the Lithuanian Perkunas were borrowed at an early date from the Vedic mythology, and that the advanced concepts and functions of these deities, as evidenced in the Rus' and Lithuanian mythologies, developed only at a much later date, under the influence of Scandinavian mythology and its main deity Thor.³⁹ On the other hand, Niederle and Hrushevsky, while admitting the possibility of Oriental and Nordic influences on the development of Perun's cult in Rus', flatly rejected the idea of a complete adoption of the god's concept from a foreign religion, and strongly maintained that Perun represented a Slavic deity. Hrushevsky proposed that Perun was derived from the Old Slavonic verb p'rati (to strike), explaining the name Perun as originally meaning "the beating one", an appellative attribute of the god of thunder.⁴⁰ Niederle instead proposed a much earlier origin for Perun, alleging that the name of this deity was derived from early Indo-European terminology associated with the phenomenon of thunder.⁴¹ Since then

philologists have shown that this indeed may be the case, as is evident from the following Indo-European names connected with thunder: Vedic Parjanya, Slavic Perun, Albanian Perëndi, Lithuanian Perkunas, Greek Keraunos, Celtic Hercynia, and Germanic Fjoergynn.⁴² According to the Soviet philologist V.Ivanov, the root common to all the above-listed words is per-, in the sense of "to strike", "to beat", or "to smite";⁴³ consequently, the name Perun is a nomen agentis, the suffix-un denoting "the beating one". This epithet is very much in keeping with the common mythological concept of the god of thunder who appears as a dangerous, warlike deity, striking down his enemies by lightning.

Another very interesting derivation of the name Perun is proposed by B.Kravciv.⁴⁴ Noting that in almost all mythologies the Thunder-god is associated with the oak tree, Kravciv suggests that Perun's name may have been derived from early tree-worship, particularly the oak. Since the worship of trees is believed to precede the creation of divine beings, and since the oak tree, due to its size and prominence, is likely to have attracted lightning flashes from time immemorial, it is very probable that in the mind of early man storms and thunder and lightning became associated with the oak. Later, with the development of an individualized Storm-god, the oak tree became a symbol of this deity and the chief object of veneration in the cult. Kravciv notes that various Indo-European words pertaining to the oak tree, such as Latin quercus, Gothic fairguni, Celtic hercynia, and Slavic pergynia, contain the root per- also found in the name of the Thunder-god Perun. Assuming that the worship of the oak antedates the worship of an individualized Thunder-god, Kravciv alleges that the names Perun, Perkunas, and Fjoergynn are all derived from the Indo-European name

for the oak, their symbolic tree. According to this derivation the name Perun would denote "the one of the oak".

It is very fortunate that some (though very brief) descriptions of Perun and his cult have been preserved both in early literary records and in folklore. The chronicler Nestor records that Perun's idol in Kiev consisted of a large wooden pillar carved with anthropomorphic features and decorated with a silver head and gold mustache.⁴⁵ In another source Perun's idol in Novgorod is described as holding in his right hand a "fiery stone", which is said to have resembled lightning.⁴⁶ In folklore Perun is conceived as holding a palytsya (club), a petlya (noose), or a bow and arrows with which he was believed to have punished and destroyed his enemies, the evil forces.⁴⁷ As the god of thunder and lightning, Perun was also conceived, due to his association with the accompanying phenomenon of rain, as a fertility deity, and acquired the epithet "giver of good harvests".⁴⁸

With the adoption of Christianity, Perun was replaced by Saint Ilya as the thunder-wielding heavenly divinity in the old East Slavic myths and legends. Till quite recently the peasants believed that thunderbolts and thunderclaps were caused by St. Ilya riding his fiery chariot across the sky.⁴⁹ According to this belief, the roar of thunder was produced by the crashing of the chariot wheels against the clouds, and the flashes of lightning were the sparks that flew from under the horses' hoofs as they galloped over the clouds. It may be conjectured that similar beliefs and myths were also associated with Perun prior to his replacement as the thunder-wielder by St. Ilya.

It is interesting to note that the name Perun is also preserved, in the form of various maledictions and topographical names (usually of hills),

by the Western and Southern Slavs.⁵⁰ On the basis of this evidence some scholars have suggested that Perun was a common Slavic deity.⁵¹ A closer analysis of the various survivals, however, reveals that these pertain to the natural phenomenon of thunder; in no case is there evidence to believe that they were associated with the higher concept of a deity personifying this phenomenon. Consequently, the preservations of the name of the Rus' Thunder-god among the Western and Southern Slavs are probably best explained as survivals of the original Indo-European word for the phenomenon of thunder.⁵²

KHORS

Following Perun the Primary Chronicle lists the two solar deities Khors and Dazhboh.⁵³ Some scholars, basing their conjectures on the fact that one of the early versions of the chronicle leaves out the conjunction i (and) between Khors and Dazhboh, have proposed that both these names are mere epithets of one and the same deity the Sun-god.⁵⁴ Whereas such may have been the case originally, it is certain that in the mythology of Kievan Rus' Khors and Dazhboh appear as two separate solar deities. Perhaps the best support for the argument that the two are separate deities is found in the epic poem Lay of Ihor's Campaign, where both Khors and Dazhboh are mentioned individually and independently of one another.⁵⁵

Etymologically the name Khors is most often derived from the Iranian words khores and kheres meaning "the sun".⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that the name of the Slavic deity is also similar to the Ossetic khur, meaning "sun",⁵⁷ and the Assyrian hurasu, Hebrew charus, and Greek khrosos, meaning "gold".⁵⁸ Gold, moreover, had as its symbol in

alchemy the solar disk;⁵⁹ consequently, one may surmise that the etymology of the word for gold has its origin in solar terminology. Such words as the Ossetic khorz⁶⁰ and the Slavic khorosh, meaning "good" or "pleasant", also appear to have a "solar" origin, and were probably derived from the life-giving properties of the sun, the source of light and heat.

A linguistic connection has also been proposed between the solar terminology and the names of the sun's sacred animals, the horse, hros, (O.H.G. meaning "horse") and ursus (Latin meaning "bear"), which are characterized by a shaggy or hairy appearance.⁶¹ The relationship between the sun and the shaggy nature of his sacred animals appears to be supported also by the early portrayals of the Sun-god, who was represented as a rounded countenance adorned with shaggy, fur-like protuberances symbolizing solar rays. An old Ukrainian saying, "Khto volo-khatyi toy bude bohatyi!" appears to associate shaggy appearance with wealth and power.⁶² Nevertheless, the opinion that there exists a linguistic connection between the words horse, hros, and solar terminology, and that this similarity is based on their resemblance in appearance, is no longer accepted by most scholars.

It is difficult to conjecture the concept of Khors and his functions in Rus' mythology, even though his importance in the pantheon of major deities is readily evident. G. Vernadsky suggests that Khors was conceived as the personification of the sun's astronomical functions, and that Dazhboh, on the other hand, represented its creative and economic functions.⁶³ Were this so, the rather primitive concept of Khors, as compared with the highly developed, abstract concept of Dazhboh, would indicate that Khors did not represent an ancient Slavic

deity. Instead, it may be possible that Khors was the patron deity of some powerful Iranian tribe or group of tribes, and that with the subjugation and incorporation of these people into the Kievan State, was himself included into the Kievan pantheon and perhaps forcibly incorporated into the Rus' mythology.

DAZHBOH

Dazhboh is one of the best preserved deities of Rus' mythology, and hence his functions require little speculation. In addition to the Malala Chronicle and the Lay of Ihor's Campaign, both of which record Dazhboh as a solar deity, the folklore and especially the kolyady preserve this god's name in prayers entreating him for bountiful harvests and general well-being.⁶⁴ The very name Dazhboh also reveals the god's characteristics and functions; most scholars derive his name from the verb dati, meaning "to give", and explain his concept as a "deus dator" or a "giving god".⁶⁵ In this respect he resembles the Iranian deity Bhaga, the "grantor of wealth and abundance", who was associated with the creative and economic properties of the sun.⁶⁶

Another possible derivation of the name Dazhboh, one which is also in keeping with the god's attribute of a solar deity, was proposed by Afanasiev who derived Dazhboh from the Iranian words dah and dahati, meaning "to burn", suggesting that the god's name denoted "the burning one".⁶⁷ This view is supported by Vernadsky, who conjectures that the "Burning god" may also be interpreted as the "Ardent god"; accordingly, he suggests that Dazhboh may be identified with Yarylo, an uncertain mythological figure preserved in

folklore.⁶⁸

There is also a third derivation of the name Dazhboh proposed by Famintsyn who identifies the Slavic deity with the Germanic god Tag or Dag, denoting the "Day-god".⁶⁹ He suggests that Dazhboh represents a borrowing from the Germanic mythology, and that he was introduced to Rus' by the Varangians. Such an explanation of Dazhboh, however, is entirely unsatisfactory, for it does not take into account the deity's functions in Rus' mythology. The fact that Dazhboh appears as the most prominent divinity in the agricultural cultus of the Eastern Slavs indicates an age-long tradition of this deity among the native population, a tradition that may be traced back to the beginnings of the agricultural economy among the proto-Slavic cultures. This evidence of continuity of a solar deity associated with agriculture precludes the possibility of its adoption from a much later military ruling class of foreigners. Moreover, the fact that this deity is also preserved among the Southern Slavs as a divinity called Dabog⁷⁰ and the Western Slavs in the form of an old personal name Dadzbog,⁷¹ probably indicates that Dazhboh originally was a common Slavic god; as such, his concept must have preceded the arrival of the Varangians among the Eastern Slavs.

STRYBOH

Next to Dazhboh in Volodymyr's pantheon the Primary Chronicle lists Stryboh. Very little is known about this deity, and except for a vague reference to it in the Lay of Ihor's Campaign, where Stryboh is addressed as the grandfather of winds,⁷² the functions and attributes of this god remain mysterious. On the basis of his being associated

with winds in the early epic, Stryboh is designated as the god of wind.

Etymologically, the name Stryboh has several derivations. Niederle derived it from stri-, an onomatopoeic root, and explained Stryboh as the personification of the natural phenomenon of wind.⁷³ Hrushevsky also accepted this explanation of Stryboh, but pointed out that the god's name may also be derived from the Old Slavonic verb stryty, meaning "to destroy"; accordingly, the god Stryboh may have possessed an evil character associated with the destructive powers of the wind.⁷⁴

The grandfather of winds, however, does not necessarily denote the god of wind. With this in mind, Kravciv proposes that Stryboh's name be derived from the root stru which is found in the names of many East European rivers, such as Dni-ster, Styr, Stryi, O-ster, and I-ster.⁷⁵ The root stru, according to Kravciv, originally meant "the flowing one" or "the surging one"; hence, Stryboh may be conjectured to have incorporated the attributes of the god of flowing waters, eternal springs, and the blowing atmosphere. In this respect, Stryboh would be similar to the Greek father of the four cardinal winds, the god Astraeus, whose name surprisingly enough also incorporates the root stru.⁷⁶

Another interesting interpretation of Stryboh is proposed by Vernadsky who, on the basis of the god's association with wind, proposes that he be identified with the Baltic god Svantovit.⁷⁷ He proposes that the Baltic deity, who was portrayed in the form of a four-headed idol, symbolized the four cardinal winds; accordingly, Vernadsky derives Svantovit's name from "svyaty viter", meaning "Holy Wind" or "Holy Spirit", and suggests that this attribute may have

also been applicable to Stryboh.

It is also possible to identify the god Stryboh with deities in foreign mythologies, the closest parallel being found perhaps in Iranian mythology. R.Jakobson notes that as in Rus' mythology where the gods Dazhboh and Stryboh are listed side by side, so in Iranian mythology the gods Bhaga and Amca appear together; he proposes that since Dazhboh appears to be similar in function to Bhaga "the giver of wealth", so Stryboh may have been conceived similar to Amca, "the distributor of wealth".⁷⁸ An analogous interpretation of Stryboh is also suggested by F.Dvornik who identifies the Rus' deity with an epithet of Ahura Mazda, Sribaga, which designated the Iranian god's function as "the distributor of wealth".⁷⁹

Unfortunately, the above-presented derivations of Stryboh, due to the extreme paucity of source-material related to the god, fail to provide a satisfactory and conclusive analysis of the deity and his functions.

SEMARGL

The god Semargl is probably the most mysterious deity of Volodymyr's pantheon, lacking a satisfactory explanation in both name and function. Some versions of the Primary Chronicle list this deity as Simar'gl, or "Sim i R'gl" or even "Sim i Er'gl", adding to the uncertainty shrouding the name, so that one does not know whether Semargl represented one or two gods.⁸⁰ One school of thought, led by Famintsyn and Jagič, explains Semargl as two separate deities, Sim and Er'gl or Eryl.⁸¹ The entire case for this school, however, is based on the identification of Eryl with the indefinite mythological figure Yarylo

(preserved in folklore), conveniently slighting the unexplainable Sim. Such speculation, needless to say, provides little insight into the concept of this deity in Kievan Rus'. Another interesting, but at the same time highly speculative, approach to the derivation and explanation of Semargl is offered by Vernadsky; he identifies the Slavic god with the Iranian Simurg or Senmurv, a deity portrayed in a half-bird, half-dog form, whose function was the dissemination of the seeds of life over the earth.⁸² However this argument also is based on uncertain material, depending almost entirely on a twelfth century Persian poet's reference to the inhabitants of Rus' as Simurgs,⁸³ and hence contributes little to the elucidation of Semargl.

MOKOSH

Last in order in the Primary Chronicle list of Volodymyr's pantheon was the deity Mokosh. Although there are many different derivations and interpretations of this deity, there is one point that is agreed upon by all — that Mokosh represented a goddess. Hence, she was the only female deity to be included in the official state pantheon of major gods.

In addition to the Primary Chronicle, Mokosh is also recorded in several later anti-heathen sermons, where she is referred to as a charodejka (witch) and is associated with the patronage of such women's work as spinning and weaving.⁸⁴ On the basis of these associations, she has been identified with the ancient Iranian goddess Api-Anahita⁸⁵ or Ardvi Sura Anahita,⁸⁶ who was also conceived as a patron of these crafts. It is interesting to note that one of Anahita's epithets, Oksho, closely resembles the name of the Slavic goddess.⁸⁷ Furthermore,

the epithet Ardvi means "moist",⁸⁸ and this concept is also related to the attributes of Mokosh, whose very name is derived by some from the Old Slavonic word mokkost' meaning "moisture".⁸⁹ It may be, as has been proposed by Vernadsky, that the East Slavic worship of the Mati-Syra-Zemlya preserves the early concepts of the goddess Mokosh, whose association with moisture may reflect her original functions as a Fertility-goddess in the cult of the earth.⁹⁰ In addition, the name of this deity is sometimes derived from the Slavic word mjekkost', which in some old records was used to translate the Greek word malakia, meaning "menstruation".⁹¹ The linguistic similarity in this case appears to indicate that Mokosh was also associated with feminine fecundity. One may conjecture on the basis of the above reviewed linguistic evidence that the Kievan goddess Mokosh incorporated within her person, in addition to the later acquired attribute of the patron of spinning and weaving, the concepts of the early Fertility-goddess and Mother Earth.

It has been also suggested that Mokosh represented a borrowed deity from the Finnic mythology, which possessed a well-attested goddess called Moksha. B.Grekov suggests that the Finnic goddess was included in the Kievan pantheon with the incorporation into the state of the subjugated Finnic tribes, noting that her cultus was most popular on the territory of the later Russian nation.⁹² It is possible, nevertheless, that the Slavic Mokosh and Finnic Moksha (as is the case with the Slavic Perun and Lithuanian Perkunas) denote separate deities whose origin dates back to prehistoric religions; moreover, it is very probable that the certain concepts which they possessed in common were greatly overshadowed by the individual features characteristic of the mythology in which they developed.⁹³

VOLOS

In addition to Svaroh and the gods listed in Volodymyr's pantheon, Rus' mythology possessed another major deity, namely Volos (or Veles). He is among the first Rus' gods attested in early chronicles, being invoked together with Perun and the symbolically represented Svaroh in treaties with Byzantium.⁹⁴ The fact that in these documents Volos is referred to by the chronicler as skotyi boh, meaning "Cattle-god", has been interpreted by some as meaning that this deity literally denoted a god of cattle, and hence Volos was explained as the patron deity of flocks and shepherds.⁹⁵ By analogy he was also identified with St. Vasylii and the Greek St. Vlasios, the tutelary saints of cattle.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Afanasiev proposed that Volos should not be interpreted as the deity of "earthly flocks" alone, but should also be associated with "heavenly flocks" — the clouds.⁹⁷ Accordingly Volos may be connected with the natural phenomena of cloudy skies and storms, and in this function he may be interpreted as a Fertility-god. Ukrainian folklore preserves a custom which appears to verify the conjecture that Volos was conceived as a fertility divinity: at the end of harvesting the peasants ceremonially tied together the last handful of corn ears and left them behind in the fields as an offering "na borodu Volosovi" (for Volos's beard).⁹⁸

It is possible, however, to interpret the epithet skotyi boh in a different way, the word skot in Old Slavonic also having meant "money" or "wealth".⁹⁹ Hence Volos may have been connected with wealth and finance, in which case he would have probably been conceived as the patron deity of trade and commerce. This interpretation of Volos is furthermore

supported by the oaths from the treaties with Byzantium. The Rus' delegation, consisting of traders and warriors, invoked Svaroh as their supreme deity, Perun as the patron of warriors, and Volos as the patron of traders.

In his capacity of the patron deity of trade and commerce, Volos may be identified with the Greek god Apollo; the similarity between these two deities does not cease at this function, but is traceable in other features and attributes. The Lay of Ihor's Campaign addresses Volos as the grandfather of the bard Boyan,¹⁰⁰ implying that the Slavic god, similarly to his Greek counterpart, was conceived also as the patron of poetry, music, and art. On the basis of the similarity in functions between Volos and Apollo, B. Kravciv proposes a common origin of these gods, supporting his hypothesis with linguistic material towards the etymology of their names.¹⁰¹ The name Volos is readily derived from the Slavic word volos, meaning "hair"; the root of this word, as is found in the Ukrainian adjectives volokhatyi and pelekhatyi (meaning "hairy" or "shaggy"), also appears in the German word Fell and the Latin words pellis and vellus (also meaning "hairy" or "shaggy") and may therefore be assumed to be of Indo-European origin. Indeed the very name of the god Apollo, who is also known by the epithets khризokomes and авrikomos, meaning "the curly one" or "the golden haired one", may also be derived from the same root.¹⁰² Furthermore, the fact that Apollo's sacred animals, the ram and the wolf, are also characterized by their shaggy appearance seems to lend additional support to the identification of Volos with Apollo. Kravciv proposes that both Volos and Apollo are reflections of a common Indo-European god who was preserved by the Eastern Slavs and brought by the Greeks into the Balkans. Whereas the Greek Apollo was undoubtedly greatly influenced by

the Near Eastern religions, the Slavic Volos probably retained most of his Indo-European features; nevertheless, certain of the advanced concepts and attributes associated with Volos have the hallmarks of having been borrowed from the Greek god Apollo.

FOOTNOTES

1. See M.Hrushevsky, Istoriya Ukrayiny-Rusy (New York, 1954), p. 394, and B.Grekov, Kiev Rūs (Moscow, 1959), p. 378.

2. Grekov, op. cit., p. 593.

3. M.Dumka, "Koly zasnovanyi Kyiv," Vitchyzna (Kiev, January 1963), p. 221. He proposes this early date on the basis of Ptolemy's work "Geography", where the second century Greek historian in a section on European Sarmatia notes the existence, on the upper Dnieper River, of a large trading center called Metropolis. The literal translation of this Greek name is "mother of cities", an expression which is very similar to one "mat' russkikh gorodov", that was commonly used by later Rus' chroniclers in reference to Kiev. Dumka concludes that Metropolis was indeed the later Rus' capital Kiev and that its founding preceded the second century A.D..

4. On the rise of the Kievan State, see Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 366-423, and Grekov, op. cit., pp. 567-642.

5. Povest' vremennykh let, V.P.Adrianova-Peretts ed., (Moscow, 1950), I, p. 56.

6. See section on Priests and Sacrifice, below.

7. In this passage the chronicle definitely refers to Egyptians, and therefore, one must assume that the name Hephaistos is a substituted Greek translation for his Egyptian counterpart Ptah. See The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, J.Hastings ed., (Edinburgh, 1927), VI, p. 382.

8. Ibid.

9. L.Niederle, Slavyanskije drevnosti (Moscow, 1956), p. 278.

10. Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 317-318.

11. N.S.Derzhavin, Slavyane v drevnosti (Moscow, 1945), pp. 142-143.

12. Niederle, op. cit., p. 278.

14. According to G.Vernadsky, Kievan Russia (New Haven, 1951), p.51.
15. N.Lavrov, "Religiya i tserkov'," Istoriya kul'tury Drevney Rusi (Moscow, 1951), II, p. 70.
16. Ibid.
17. See Niederle, op. cit., pp. 278-279. He considers Svarozhych to be the god of the hearth.
18. G.Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia (Oxford, 1959), pp. 120-121.
19. Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey, M.N.Tikhomirov ed., (Moscow, 1962), I, p. 32.
20. Translated by G.F. from Povest' vremennykh let., I, p. 35.
21. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 121.
22. From Theitmar's "dii quorum primus Zuarasici dicitur", according to Niederle, op. cit., p. 278.
23. Helmold, The Chronicle of the Slavs, p. 219, from Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 119.
24. See T.G.Fraser's The New Golden Bough, T.H.Gaster ed., (Garden City N.Y., 1961), pp. 107-113.
25. R.Jakobson, "Slavic Mythology," Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, II, p. 1026.
26. F.Dvornik, The Slavs, Their Early History and Civilization (Boston, 1956), p. 49.
27. B.Kravciv, Do problemy Tura-Svaroha-Troyana (Philadelphia, 1952).
28. Ipatievskaya letopis', (1871), p. 229, according to Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 319.
29. For a discussion of the bull cult among the E. Slavs see Kravciv, op. cit., pp. 1-5.
30. Niederle, op. cit., p. 281.
31. G.Vernadsky, Kievan Russia (New Haven, 1951), pp. 52-53.
32. It is interesting to note that the number three associated with, or incorporated into, the name of a major (perhaps even supreme) deity is also found among other Slavs, as in the cases of god Triglav among Baltic Slavs and god Trzy or Trzybog among the Poles. See Derzhavin, op. cit., p. 138.

33. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 53, suggests that this triad included the gods Dazhboh, Khors, and Stryboh; however, this membership is speculative, as no supporting material is readily available in the E. Slavic folklore.

34. Ibid.

35. Povest' vremennykh let, I. p. 32.

36. Lavrov, op. cit., I, p. 71, and Grekov, op. cit., p. 517.

37. Ibid.

38. Entsiklopedichesky slovar', published by Brokhaus-Efron, (St. Petersburg, 1900), XXIII, pp. 413-414.

39. Ibid., XXX, pp. 314-315.

40. Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, p. 317.

41. Niederle, op. cit., p. 278.

42. Jakobson, op. cit., p. 1026.

43. V.Ivanov, "K etimologii baltiyskogo i slavyanskogo nazvaniy boga groma," Voprosy slavyanskogo yazykoznaniiya (Moscow, 1958), III, p. 108.

44. B.Kravciv, "Mitologichnyi svit 'Slova o polku Ihorevi'," Slovo o polku Ihorevi, S.Hordyns'kyi ed., (Philadelphia, 1950), pp. 68-69.

45. Povest' vremennykh let., I, p. 56.

46. From Hosius' "Moscow Chronicle", according to H.Máchal, Nákres slovanského bájeslovi (Prague, 1891), p. 22.

47. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar', XXIII, p. 414.

48. Ibid.

49. Máchal, op. cit., p. 24.

50. See Dvornik, op. cit., p. 49; also, Niederle, op. cit., p. 277.

51. Niederle, op. cit., p. 276.

52. A similar view is held by Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 317.

53. Povest' vremennykh let, I, p. 56.

54. See Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 319.

55. Slovo o polku Ihorevi, p. 20 and p. 12.
56. Niederle, op. cit., p. 281.
57. From G.Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia, p. 108.
58. From O.Schrader, Prehistoric Antiquities of the Aryan Peoples,
Translated by F.B.Tevons (London, 1880), p. 174.
59. Ibid., p. 156.
60. From Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 108.
61. Kravciv, op. cit., p. 68.
62. Ibid.
63. G.Vernadsky, Kievan Russia, p. 51.
64. The use of the god's name in the refrain appears to have a
magical significance, and is repeated after each petition, for example:

Shchob u poli vrozhayno,
Oy Dazhd'bozhe!
U dvori zbroyno, v komori povno,
Oy Dazhd'bozhe!

 From S.Kylymnyk, Ukrayins'kyi rik u narodnikh zvychayakh (Winnipeg, 1955),
 I, pp. 80-81.
65. See Máchal, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
66. Jakobson, op. cit., p. 1022.
67. From G.Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia, p. 121.
68. Ibid.
69. From Derzhavin, op. cit., p. 142.
70. Niederle, op. cit., p. 279.
71. Jakobson, op. cit., p. 1027.
72. Slovo o polku Ihorevi, p. 10.
73. Niederle, op. cit., p. 280.
74. Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 332.
75. B.Kravciv, op. cit., p. 70.
76. Ibid.
77. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 122.

78. Jakobson, op. cit., p. 1027.
79. Dvornik, op. cit., p. 50.
80. See Lavrov, op. cit., p. 67.
81. Ibid.
82. Vernasky, Kievan Russia, pp. 53-54.
83. Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia, p. 124.
84. See Máchal, op. cit., p. 36, and Lavrov, op. cit., p. 69.
85. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 123.
86. Dvornik, op. cit., p. 50.
87. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 124.
88. Dvornik, op. cit., p. 50.
89. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 123.
90. Ibid.
91. See Niederle, op. cit., p. 280, and Máchal, op. cit., p. 36.
92. Grekov, op. cit., p. 516.

93. It is interesting to note that a female divinity called Mokosh is also preserved in Czech folklore, where she appears as a fertility-goddess. See Lavrov, op. cit., p. 69. This evidence provides additional support to the case of Mokosh as a Slavic goddess.

94. Povest' vremennykh let, I, p. 32.
95. Niederle, op. cit., p. 279.
96. Ibid. p. 280.
97. According to Entsiklopedichesky slovar', VII, p. 98.
98. Máchal, op. cit., p. 34.

99. From Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 321. It is interesting to note that the English word "stock" may also mean "capital" or "cattle".

100. Slovo o polku Ihorevi, p. 7.
101. Kravciv, op. cit., p. 66.

102. Ibid. p. 67. Kravciv derives the name Apollo from such Indo-European words as pellis, vellus, and velare, which denote a "shaggy" appearance.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGIOUS CULTUS

Whereas most of the information about the major deities of Kievan Rus' due to the paucity of source-materials has to be derived from a study of comparative mythology and speculative philology, the study of the religious cultus is facilitated by substantial archeological discoveries and illuminating, though very brief, literary records. The native records, however, provide little description of the heathen cultus, but they nevertheless verify the existence of various forms of higher worship in Rus' mythology, such as anthropomorphically represented idols, temples, priests, and sacrifice. It is therefore mostly from foreign sources especially the evidence of the Arab geographers and German missionaries, that the heathen religious cultus of the Eastern Slavs may be partially recreated. The former provide very interesting and detailed descriptions of certain rites practiced by Rus' traders, and the latter record many features of the pagan cultus among the twelfth century Baltic Slavs. Since similar features have been found in the archeological discoveries on the territory of Kievan Rus' and in various rites and customs preserved in Eastern Slavic folklore, one may assume that the Rus' cultus closely resembled that of the Baltic Slavs, and consequently that the descriptions pertaining to the latter may also be applicable to the former.

IDOLS

The best attested feature of the heathen cultus in Kievan Rus' is the worship of idols. According to the early chronicles, these idols

appeared as anthropomorphic statues of the major deities of Rus'; they were known by such names as idol, bolvan, istukan, kumyr, modla, kap, stod, and sokha.¹ It is interesting to note that most of the above-listed names appear to have a Turkic or Oriental origin;² this probably indicates the direction of the influence and perhaps even the place of origin of Slavic idol-worship. Ancient literary records, such as the chronicles of Helmold and Bishop Herbert of Brandenburg, attest that idol-worship was very widespread among the Slavs, and that in their missionary work they encountered "countless" heathen idols.³ In all probability Slavic idol-worship was divided into three spheres: the worship of the statues of major national deities located in cult centers; the veneration of local patron deities in the sacred assembly places in cities and villages; and the adoration of various fetishes and figurines of ancestor or tutelary spirits (penates) on an individual family or household basis. The fact that so few of these statues and figurines of heathen gods survived may be attributed to the fact that they were made of wood, which failed to stand the test of time.

The first mention of Rus' idols in the Primary Chronicle occurs under the year 945 in conjunction with Knyaz' Ihor's campaign against Constantinople.⁴ The chronicle states that upon his return to Kiev Ihor paid thanksgiving to the god Perun and offered a share of the spoils to his idol. The next mention of idols occurs under the year 980, the date of the creation of the Kievan pantheon.⁵ In relating this milestone of Rus' mythology, the chronicler states that the idols of the major gods comprising the pantheon were erected on a hill outside the palace walls, and describes Perun's idol as made of wood and possessing a silver head and a gold mustache. No description is given

of the other idols in the pantheon, but we may assume that these too were anthropomorphically represented and richly decorated.

Additional accounts of early Rus' idols are found in the records of the Arab geographer Ibn-Fadlan. He describes a sanctuary of Rus' traders on an island in the Ityl' River, where the Slavic merchants stopped to propitiate their gods prior to embarking on their business ventures.⁶ This sanctuary consisted of a clearing in the center of which stood a large idol carved from a tree trunk; around this main idol, who was addressed by the traders as "master", were several smaller wooden idols arranged in a semicircle, which were conceived as the wives and daughters of the main god. This description is especially interesting since it attests that divine genealogy was not unknown in Rus' mythology.

In addition to the various wooden idols, the people of Rus' also worshipped elaborate statues of their gods which were made of stone. Many such stone idols were discovered on the territory of Kievan Rus', but only a small number of these may be classified as Slavic idols.⁷ The great majority of the kamyani baby, as these statues are known, are believed to be early monuments of the various nomadic tribes, and were probably erected in honour of their deceased rulers. Of the authenticated Slavic stone idols almost all were found in the Podillya, Volyn', and Halychyna provinces of Ukraine, a fact which is explained by archeologists by the ready availability of stone in these regions.⁸ It may therefore be concluded that both wood and stone were utilized by the Rus' artists in the construction of their idols, the material used probably depending on its availability in the particular area. Moreover, wooden idols appear to have preceded stone ones, for the carving techniques in the latter betray the sculptor's wood-working background.⁹ The distinguishing

characteristics of Rus' idols, according to M. Miller, an archeologist who personally studied them, are the four-sided appearance of the idols and their polycephalic or many-headed nature.¹⁰ Miller considers this latter characteristic to be a typically Slavic feature.

The best specimen of Rus' idols made of stone was discovered in 1848 in the river Zbruch near Husyatyn, Halychyna.¹¹ The idol consists of a large, quadrangular stone pillar, almost three meters in length, which is divided into three distinct, horizontal rows of images. The statue is crowned with a head of four faces — each of which belongs to one of the four separate, anthropomorphic figures carved on each side of the quadrangular pillar. Two of the figures are masculine and two are feminine, the latter being distinguished by the presence of breasts. Of the masculine figures, one is represented with a sword hanging from his belt, and a miniature horse at his feet; the other masculine figure is not distinguished by any attributes. Of the feminine figures, one is portrayed as holding a ceremonial horn or rhyton, and the other with what appears to be a ring or a cup in her hand. The middle row of images also consists of four human figures, two masculine and two feminine; these are carved in such a manner that they appear to be holding hands in a circle. The bottom row of the idol has schematic representations only on three of its sides — portrayed is a kneeling masculine figure with a long mustache, who appears to be supporting the rest of the statue with his hands. A close examination of the statue also revealed traces of paint, a fact which is believed to indicate that the entire idol was originally schematically painted.

Many scholars have proposed many different explanations for the Zbruch idol. Some identified the statue as that of the Baltic Svantovit,¹²

described by Helmold. Others believed that the idol represented the four seasons of the year.¹³ Still others saw in the idol a representation of the entire "cosmogony" of the Rus' mythology¹⁴ — the top row of figures representing the heavens and heavenly deities; the middle row depicting the earth and its inhabitants, who are portrayed in a ceremonial dance around their idol; and the bottom row signifying the underworld and its King, who appears to be supporting the earth and the sky. Although it is easy to propose various imaginative explanations of the idol, it is very difficult to support them with substantial proof. Perhaps the most cautious approach to the explanation of the Zbruch idol is to analyze it on the basis of the information available about the idols of the Baltic Slavs. It is known that these idols were characterized by polycephalic features (Svantovit had four faces; Triglav, three heads; Rugievit, seven faces; and Porevit, five heads), which probably denote the omniscient and omnipotent nature of the gods; that they were portrayed with weapons and military standards, and hence were probably conceived as War-gods; that they were depicted with sacred rhytons used in divination of future harvests, and hence were probably believed to be Fertility-gods; and that, their sacred animals were horses, a feature which probably indicates that they were also conceived as solar deities.¹⁵ Since the Zbruch idol possesses these features as well — it is polycephalic, and its figures are portrayed with a sword, a horse and a rhyton — it is possible to conjecture that it was associated with an omnipotent deity or deities, which also incorporated agricultural, martial, and solar functions. As for the remaining images and symbols represented on the statue, up to now these have not been satisfactorily explained; hence, they must await further archeological discoveries to be fundamentally comprehended.

In addition to the Zbruch idol, there are many recorded cases of the existence of pre-Christian stone idols in south-western Ukraine.¹⁶ Unfortunately these were destroyed under the pressure of ignorant clergy who sought to eradicate all relics of heathenism. Of particular interest to the students of Slavic mythology would have been the idol discovered in a field near Husyatyn, Halychyna, not far from where the Zbruch idol was found.¹⁷ This remnant of the Rus' mythology, according to those who saw it, had the form of an enormous pillar characterized by a human head, and carved images of horses and various other mysterious beings and symbols; however, it was destroyed by over-zealous Christians about 1875. A large polycephalic idol standing on two pairs of feet was also recorded near the village of Lopushna in Halychyna, in 1850, but unfortunately this statue was later sculptured into a cross as a sign of Christianity's victory over heathenism.¹⁸

TEMPLES

The chronicles state that the Rus' idols were erected in kapishcha.¹⁹ It is not known for certain, but it is very probable that this term was applied indiscriminately to actual temples, open-air sanctuaries, and even sacred groves. In all probability the kapishcha were located on hill-tops overlooking lakes and rivers, for the Primary Chronicle records that following the adoption of Christianity the majority of the heathen idols were uprooted, dragged down from their kapishcha, and cast into rivers.²⁰ Unfortunately, the study of the heathen temples of Rus' is handicapped by the fact that very few sites of cult significance have been uncovered by archeologists thus far. It may well be that the reason for the paucity of archeological material is partly due to the fact that these temples were

constructed of wood and therefore did not stand the test of time. However, it is also known that the Orthodox Church spared no pains to ensure the complete eradication of the heathen beliefs and that it carried out an extensive campaign of destruction of heathen idols and temples. Metropolitan Ilarion of Kiev, who lived in the eleventh century, states in his Slovo o zakoni i blahodati:

Rus' is baptized from one end of the land to the other; heathen temples and altars are everywhere uprooted and destroyed... in their places Christian churches are being constructed.²¹

Of the few thus far uncovered sites which appear to have been heathen kapishcha the most impressive is that excavated by V.Khvoiko in 1908, under the Desyatynna Cathedral in Kiev. Excavation of the site revealed a large elliptical platform with four rectangular protuberances at its vertices.²² The platform was constructed of rocks and covered on top with several layers of animal bones and ashes. Khvoiko explained the site as the foundation of a large structure which originally was to have been built upon the platform. Recent excavations in the area reveal, however, that the site once stood on the premises of an enormous building, giving rise to conjectures that it represented the inner sanctum of an elaborate heathen temple.²³ There have been many attempts to elucidate the role of this kapishche in Rus' mythology; some scholars explained it as the Kievan shrine of Svantovit,²⁴ while others suggested that the site represented the cult-center of the god Perun.²⁵ Such speculations, however, are not founded on the evidence available. The only factual conclusions that may be drawn are that the elliptical platform, due to the layers of ashes and animal bones upon it, represented a sacrificial altar, and that the four protuberances at its vertices were probably the foundations of large idols to whom the sacrifices were

offered. A similar altar was also discovered in 1938 under the Uspens'kyi Sobor in ancient Halych;²⁶ however here, as in the case of the Kievan site, nothing certain about the above-ground structure of the temple can be derived. The same is true for a recently discovered heathen site in Novgorod, where archeologists unearthed the remains of a large wooden building, within the center of which stood a massive wooden pillar.²⁷ In all probability this site represents the temple of Perun mentioned in the Primary Chronicle,²⁸ and the remains of the pillar, the god's idol. The above, unfortunately, represents all the information that can be derived from archeology thus far, about the heathen temples of Rus'.

For further information about the construction of these temples and their content, it is necessary to turn to ancient literary sources which record descriptions of temples among the Baltic Slavs. According to Ditmar of Merseburg, the temple of Svarozhych, which incidentally was located in a sacred grove, was built of wood on a foundation of animal horns, and had three entrances.²⁹ Its walls were decorated, both inside and out, with beautifully sculptured and painted images of gods and goddesses. The interior contained many gold and silver ritual articles; and the richly decorated idol was surrounded by battle-standards and arms. Special priests were in charge of the temple and they approached the god on behalf of the worshipers. The temple of Redegast, as recorded by Adam of Bremen, displays further features of interest.³⁰ It was located on a small island and surrounded by a wall with nine gates; the interior was very elaborately decorated and contained weapons and articles of ritual. The statue of the god was allegedly made of solid gold, and even had a "purple" bed beside it to be used for relaxation. This temple also was in charge of special priests. Perhaps the most

interesting description of a heathen Slavic temple was recorded by Saxo Grammaticus who provided an account of the temple of Svantovit on the Island of Rugen.³¹ This shrine was located on a hill facing the sea; the building, which was square-shaped and constructed of wood, was decorated with various intricate designs and images; it was covered by a red roof which contained the only entrance to it. The inner sanctum of the temple, where the god's statue stood, was separated from the rest by partitions of precious draperies, the remainder of the building being used to store Svantovit's possessions, including one third of the spoils of war, his weapons, and his sacred animal, the white horse. A special guard of honour consisting of three hundred horse soldiers and three hundred foot soldiers protected the temple. Since Rus' and Baltic Slavic mythologies possess many common features, it may be surmised that similarities also existed in the construction of their temples; consequently, one may imply that the Rus' temples possessed corresponding characteristics. The splendor and radiance of the individual temples probably depended upon the importance of the patron deity associated with the temple and the locality in which the shrine was constructed, the larger and wealthier centers undoubtedly possessing the more elaborate temples.

The account of the Arab geographer Masudi is another interesting ancient source of information about Slavic temples.³² Unfortunately most students of Slavic mythology, owing to the influence of the above-mentioned theories of Slavic cultural inferiority, are unable to accept the idea that the Slavs possessed splendid, richly decorated temples; they tend to regard Masudi's ascription of these to the Slavs either as unreliable information or as a case of mistaken identity,

suggesting that the temples in reality belonged to some other (often any other!) ethnic group.³³ However, Masudi's attestation, when analyzed in the light of the recent information about the early culture of the Slavs provided by archeology, appears to be for the most part reliable, even though it may be somewhat exaggerated. The Arab described three Rus' temples all of which were constructed on high hills, and two of which overlooked large bodies of water; the interior of all three was splendidly decorated with precious stones and metals. One of these temples, which according to Masudi was attributed to the Sun-god, was constructed in such a manner that various openings created in its roof enabled the priests to trace the god's course across the heavens and interpret his oracular responses. Another of these temples was constructed in honour of a god who was represented within it in the form of a large idol depicting an old man with a cane. The third temple contained the statue of a supposedly ancient wise-man who became venerated as a god, as a result of his magical powers. In the above description many of the recorded features of the temples — such as their location on hill-tops, proximity to water, their richly decorated interiors, the openings in the roof, the evidence of a sun-cult, and the representation of the idol with a cane ³⁴ — are attested by other sources describing Slavic temples, and therefore may be considered evidence of their Slavic origin.

PRIESTS

As well as idols and temples the highly developed religions possess a priesthood. In some religious systems, particularly among Semitic

peoples, the office of priest, as a result of the great power wielded by the religious leader, became inseparable from the office of king; thus there appeared a divine position of priest-king, incorporating both the religious and political leadership.³⁵ In religions such as Brahmanism, priesthood became highly specialized, and owing to the great respect paid to the office it developed into a hereditary caste.³⁶ Still other religions preserved more primitive functions for their religious leaders, who acted in the capacity of magic-wielding shamans.³⁷ Curiously enough, the religious cultus of Kievan Rus' appears to have incorporated all three types of priesthood, a feature further depicting the divergent religious influences on its mythology.

The Primary Chronicle records that on the official or national level public worship and associated sacrifices were conducted by the knyaz' himself.³⁸ At the lower levels the presiding political or social leader (in the case of a household it was the head of the family) acted in the same capacity.³⁹ Linguistic similarity in the terminology pertaining to the offices of king and priest appears to indicate that the two functions among the early Slavs may have been combined in the person of a priest-king — in Czech kněz means "king" and knež means "priest"; moreover, in Polish książe means "king" and ksiądz means "priest".⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that N. Rybakov in his study of the inventory of a Rus' royal burial in the Chorna Mohyla discovered alongside the body of the knyaz' rhytons, several slaughter knives, and a small fetish of a god — ritual utensils which denote the office of a priest.⁴¹ Very probably the knyaz' buried in this grave acted in the capacity of a priest-king, incorporating both the political and religious functions.

In addition to hinting at the existence of the office of priest-king, the Primary Chronicle records another Rus' religious order — the volkhvy.⁴² According to E.V. Anichkov, who studied the volkhvy extensively, this group represented a socio-religious organization whose functions included healing the sick, prophesying future events, and providing spiritual, and, in time of national emergencies, even political leadership.⁴³ The volkhvy, as is evident from later ecclesiastical writings, were believed to possess some sort of mysterious knowledge and magical powers; moreover, in religious ceremonies, especially during divination, they were known to utilize psychic influences through dreams, visions, trances, and ecstasy.⁴⁴ In this respect the volkhvy resembled Finnic shamans. The fact that the greatest degree of similarity between the shamans and volkhvy is evidenced in the records from northern Russia may indicate that the Rus' religious order developed under the Finnic influence.

Priesthood among the Baltic Slavs, on the other hand, may have developed under still different conditions, for, as is evident from the records of various Catholic missionaries, the Baltic priests appear to have formed an almost hereditary caste, possessing great power and influence in the community. The temples were in their care; they performed the various sacrifices on behalf of the community and individual worshippers; and they divined future events or interpreted the patron deity's oracular responses.⁴⁵ By comparison, ancient Rus' records provide little evidence that the volkhvy constituted any sort of hereditary priesthood, although there is no doubt that they formed a special religious order, perhaps even a privileged social class. It may be nevertheless possible that the early records mentioning the volkhvy, since they were written

by their arch-enemies, the early Christian priests and monks, present a prejudiced picture of the heathen spiritual leaders attempting to degrade them to a position of primitive magicians or witch-doctors. If this be the case, it is possible that the volkhvy in Rus' mythology enjoyed a position similar to the priests of the Baltic Slavs, and that only after the adoption of Christianity by the state, when their political role and privileged position disappeared, did they, in adapting their activities to the new unfavourable conditions, become conceived as mere magicians and sorcerers.

WORSHIP, SACRIFICE, AND DIVINATION

Early Slavic literature preserves very little of the actual worship ritual associated with the Rus' religious cultus, save a few very brief and condescending references. The most interesting account of this topic is again provided by a foreign source, the Arab Ibn-Fadlan, who describes the propitiation of idols by a commercial expedition to the Khazar city of Ityl'.⁴⁶ As has been noted above, the Rus' traders propitiated their idols in a permanent sanctuary near the place. According to Ibn-Fadlan, prior to embarking upon business transactions, the trader would come before the idols of his gods bringing with him offers of bread, meat, milk, onions, and alcoholic beverage; prostrating himself before the main idol, the trader would then relate to his "master" his journey and his intentions, enumerating all the wares and commodities brought with him. Following this initial act of propitiation he would entreat his god to send him buyers who would purchase all his goods on favourable terms, and, withdrawing from the idol, proceed upon his business. Should this undertaking

become a long or unprofitable affair, the trader would return and offer additional gifts to appease his gods, repeating this action two or three times if deemed necessary. As a last resort the trader would offer gifts to each of the lesser idols beseeching the "wives and daughters" to intercede with the "master" on the trader's behalf. On the other hand, if the trading transaction went well and profitably for him, the trader would declare, "The master has complied with my wishes; I must now reward him for this." With this he would sacrifice a number of sheep and cattle, giving a portion of the meat to the poor, placing the rest before the idols, and impaling the animal heads on posts surrounding the idols. When, upon arrival at the sanctuary the next day, the worshiper saw that his sacrifice had disappeared (eaten during the night by dogs and other animals) he would say joyfully, "My master has eaten the offering; he is in accord with me!"

Judging from this very colourful description of the manner of worship on the part of the traders, it is possible to surmise the general characteristics of the worship ritual practiced in Rus'. On the individual or family level the manner of worship and propitiation very probably resembled closely that of the traders, the sacrifices being offered consisting of such foodstuffs as bread, cheese, honey, garlic, onions, eggs, chickens, and alcoholic beverages.⁴⁷ On the community or city level, the worshiping ritual probably had a much more elaborate and complicated form, undoubtedly being directed by some sort of officiating priests, and including communal banquets and ceremonial singing and dancing. Sacrifices on this level probably consisted of the offering of larger foodstuffs, grain, and domestic animals.⁴⁸ The manner of worship at a still higher level, tribal or

even national, probably incorporated an even more elaborate ritual and was probably presided over by high dignitaries, such as the knyaz'. Sacrifices at this level were mostly blood-sacrifices of animals and human beings, the latter being comprised of prisoners of war, criminals, children, and non-believers.⁴⁹

The techniques of divination employed in Rus' mythology must also be derived on the basis of the information available in the sources describing the mythology of the Baltic Slavs. By analogy, it may be argued that similar, if not identical, techniques of divination were employed in Kievan Rus'. Ditmar of Merseburg in his description of the temple of Svarozhych, relates that the god's sacred animal, the horse, played an important role in divining future events.⁵⁰ Prior to any large community undertaking the sacred horse was led by the chief priest through a maze of spears stuck in the ground, and the omens for the undertaking were divined from the animal's mode of stepping over the spears; if the horse raised his right foot first, it was considered to be a good omen; if instead he raised his left foot first, it was considered a bad omen, and the undertaking was dropped. Saxo Grammaticus also records an interesting method of divination;⁵¹ he relates that Svantovit's idol held in his right hand a rhyton which was filled annually with wine by the head priest. At a fixed time of year the priest examined the liquid in the rhyton and according to the amount remaining pronounced the omen. If the amount of wine in the rhyton did not decrease appreciably, the priest interpreted it as a good omen and forecast an abundant harvest. If, on the other hand, the rhyton contained very little wine, it was considered to be a bad omen and a poor harvest was expected. The Baltic priests were also known to divine

future events with the help of coloured wooden slats which were believed to reveal omens in the form of various patterns when cast upon the ground.⁵² It is probable that countless other divining techniques were also employed by the early Slavs, for the folklore preserves an almost inexhaustable record of these. Certainly the popular methods of foretelling future events included divination from the flight of birds, from the examination of the entrails of sacrificed animals, and from astrology — techniques which appear common to all Indo-European mythologies.⁵³

FUNERAL CUSTOMS.

The paucity of source-materials about the Rus' religious cultus permits us to examine only one other feature of it — the customs, beliefs, and rites associated with death, the funeral ceremony, and after-life. Literary records mentioning these are especially valuable since they can be supported and complemented with information from archeology. Hence this aspect of the religious cultus appears as the best-attested and therefore the best-understood feature of Rus' mythology.

The most interesting account of a Rus' funeral is again recorded by Ibn-Fadlan;⁵⁴ he describes a ceremony witnessed by him, in the city of Ityl' at the beginning of the tenth century. According to the Arab, the deceased, who was a wealthy Rus' trader, was temporarily interred, provided with such necessities as food, drink, and husli (a musical instrument). In the meantime, his relatives and friends busied themselves preparing for the funeral: the deceased trader's wealth was divided into three portions, one of which was given to his family, another being used to procure the necessary funeral inventory, and the third being allotted for the funeral feast; one of the deceased's

slave-girls who had volunteered to be put to death with her master was also being prepared for the funeral, and was given freedom to spend her remaining days in merrymaking and excessive drinking. On the day chosen for the funeral (ten days after the death of the trader), one of the Rus' boats was beached, propped up with supports on a funeral pyre, and surrounded with idols of Rus' gods; the deceased was then exhumed, dressed in his finest attire, and placed in a sitting position within a tent in the boat. The entire preparation was conducted by an old woman who was referred to as the "angel of death". She arranged his weapons and personal belongings around the deceased and slaughtered some of his animals — notably two horses, two cows, a rooster and a hen, and a dog — which were also placed in the vessel. Then the slave-girl who had volunteered to die with her master was brought forth and raised thrice to some sort of "door". In ecstasy she shouted that she could see her master, "He sits in a beautiful, green garden; with him are men and youths; he is calling me! Take me to him!" She was then led to the boat, bidding farewell to the world with sorrowful songs, and put to death by the old woman. Following this, each of the congregated mourners threw a lighted torch onto the pyre; in an hour only the ashes remained. After the traditional funeral feast, which was celebrated on the spot, the gathering erected a large burial mound into which the ashes of the deceased were placed. Ibn-Fadlan quoted a Rus' trader who, after the ceremony, allegedly said to him:

You Arabs are a foolish people, for you bury your most important and respected people in the earth, there to be fed-upon by worms and snakes. We, instead, cremate them, and in but one minute they enter paradise.⁵⁵

From the above account it is possible to derive the following conclusion about the heathen Rus' conception of after-life: the fact

that the deceased, his personal belongings, his animals, and even his wife were believed to enter paradise indicates that after-life was conceived as similar to the life on earth. This paradise, or as it was called rai (also irey, or vyriy), was imagined to be a land of light, warmth, and happiness; covered with beautiful gardens, it was believed to be the winter home of migrating birds, to which they winged for the winter and from which they returned with the coming of spring.⁵⁶ An account by Greek Leo Diakon provides additional information about the Rus' conception of after-life; it states that in battle Rus' warriors never surrendered and often committed suicide in order to die as free men, lest they should be made slaves and continue as slaves in after-life.⁵⁷ Judging from this it appears that the Rus' conception of after-life also incorporated the idea of the social stratification which existed on earth.

The funeral customs described by Ibn-Fadlan reflect the heterogeneous nature of Rus' mythology. It is very probable that the custom of marrying a bachelor after his death, that is of providing him with a wife for the after-life, is of ancient Indo-European origin.⁵⁸ The rich grave inventory and the funeral sacrifice of animals resemble Scythian customs, but are also found among other Indo-Europeans. The use of a boat as the vehicle designed to convey the deceased into after-life, appears as a mysterious custom, which has been explained by some as a borrowing from the Varangians.⁵⁹ It is possible, however, that this practice was not borrowed, and that the use of the boat was merely intended to provide the deceased with the same means of transportation back to the land of his forefathers as that by which he arrived.

In addition to boats, other sources record that the early Eastern Slavs also used sleighs and kolody or "logs" in their funeral ceremonies.⁶⁰ The sleighs appear to have been used as means of conveying the dead to the grave; the origin of this custom is uncertain and may represent a borrowing from some northern, perhaps Finnic culture. It is also possible that the use of the sled in transporting the deceased, rather than denoting a borrowed custom, represents a survival of the earliest mode of transporting heavy weights, the sledge most certainly having preceded the cart. As for the feature of kolody (the same root is also found in the word kladovyshche, meaning "graveyard") in early Rus' burials, both the word and the custom are believed to be of Turkic origin.⁶¹

A very important part of the Rus' funeral was the communal feast called tryzna, following the burial ceremony. It is interesting to note that the tryzna ceremony began at once after the disposal of the body, the mourning rites, which appear to have incorporated exaggerated lamentations and mild forms of self-mutilation, ceasing abruptly and giving way to joyous celebrations. According to the chronicles, a tryzna in the honour of an important person lasted from twelve to fifteen days.⁶² It consisted of a prolonged communal banquet accompanied by heavy drinking, singing and dancing; also ceremonial games and mock-battles were staged at the graveside. To all appearances, these activities and the feasting were intended to pay tribute to the deceased, and perhaps, in a smaller measure, to keep evil spirits away from the body.

FOOTNOTES

1. According to L.Niederle, Slavyanskije drevnosti (Moscow, 1956), p. 288.
2. Ibid.
3. See E.V.Anichkov, Yazychestvo i Drevnyaya Rus' (St. Petersburg, 1914), p. 357.
4. Povest' vremennykh let, V.Adrianova-Peretts ed., (Moscow, 1950), I, p. 35.
5. Ibid., p. 56.
6. Ibn-Fadlan, "Zapiski," Skazaniya musul'manskikh pisateley o Slavyanakh i Russkikh, A.Ya.Garkavi ed., (St. Petersburg, 1870), pp. 95-96.
7. For a study and classification of these, see M.Miller, "Kamyani baby," Novi Dni (Toronto, July-August 1958), pp. 15-18.
8. See M.Miller, "Pohans'ki bohy v Ukrayini," Novi Dni (Toronto, October 1957), p. 18.
9. Ibid., p. 17.
10. Ibid., p. 18.
11. For a discussion of the idol, see A.Zakharov, "The Statue of Zbrucz," Minns Volume (Helsinki, 1934), pp. 336-348, and M.Miller, "Zbruchans'kyi idol," Novi Dni (Toronto, April 1957), pp. 18-20.
12. J.Lelewel, Cześć bałwochwalcza Słowjan i Polski (Poznan, 1857), according to Zakharov, op. cit., p. 339.
13. Rymarkiewicz, Jana Kochanowskiego pieśń świętojańska o Sobótce (Poznan, 1884), according to Zakharov, op. cit., p. 339.
14. Miller, op. cit., p. 19.
15. From the records of the German missionaries, according to N.Kostomarov, Slavyanskaya mifologiya (Kiev, 1847) pp. 4-33.
16. See Y.Pasternak, Arkheolohiya Ukrayiny (Toronto, 1961), pp. 579-580.
17. Ibid., p. 579.
18. Ibid.
19. Povest' vremennykh let, I, p. 80.

20. Ibid.
21. According to M.Hrushevsky, Istoriya Ukrayiny-Rusy (New York, 1954), I, p. 513.
22. M.Karger, Drevniy Kiev (Kiev, 1958), pp. 105-112.
23. G.Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia (Oxford, 1959), p. 164.
24. K.Bolsunovskiy, Zhertvennik Germesa-Svetovida (Kiev, 1909), according to Karger, op. cit., pp. 106-108.
25. L.A.Dintses, "Dokhristianskie khramy Rusi," Sovetska etnografiya (Moscow, 1947), p. 76, according to Karger, op. cit., p. 112.
26. Y.Pasternak, Staryi Halych (Lviv, 1944), p. 52.
27. See A.Mongait, Archeology in the U.S.S.R. (Moscow, 1959), p. 370.
28. Povest' vremennykh let, II, p. 344.
29. From Ditmar's of Merseburg writings, according to Kostomarov, op. cit., pp. 3-5.
30. From Adam's of Bremen writings, according to Kostomarov, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
31. The writings of Saxo Grammaticus, from Kostomarov, op. cit., pp. 7-11.
32. Al' Masudi, "Sochineniya," Skazaniya musul'manskikh pisateley, pp. 139-140.
33. For a review of the different evaluations of Masudi's comments, see Garkavi, op. cit., pp. 171-175.
34. It is worthy to note that this idol was characterized by a "cane", since the idol of Perun in Novgorod, according to Povest' vremennykh let, II, p. 344, was also depicted with a cane. Perhaps Masudi was referring to a temple attributed to Perun.
35. See E.O.James, The Nature and Function of Priesthood (London, 1955), p. 105.
36. Ibid., pp. 149-151.
37. Ibid., pp. 33-35.
38. Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey, M.N.Tikhomirov ed., (Moscow, 1962), I, p. 82.
39. See Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 326-328.

40. See Kostomarov, op. cit., p. 106.
41. B.A.Rybakov, "Drevnosti Chernigova," Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii S.S.S.R. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1949), No. 11, p. 34.
42. Povest' vremennykh let, I, p. 29.
43. E.V.Anichkov, Yazychestvo i Drevnyaya Rus' (St. Petersburg, 1949), p. 270.
44. Ibid., pp. 270-271.
45. See Niederle, op. cit., pp. 290-291.
46. Ibn-Fadlan, op. cit., pp. 95-96.
47. According to Niederle, op. cit., p. 290.
48. Hrushevsky, op. cit., pp. 327-328.
49. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar', published by Brokhaus-Efron, (St. Petersburg, 1900), XXII, p. 414.
50. See Kostomarov, op. cit., p. 4.
51. Ibid., p. 10.
52. Ibid.
53. See O.Schrader, "Aryan Religion," The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh, 1927), II, p.
54. Ibn-Fadlan, op. cit., pp. 96-101.
55. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
56. For a discussion of the Rus' rai, see Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 336.
57. According to Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 330.
58. Schrader, op. cit., p.
59. Niederle, op. cit., pp. 209-210.
60. Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 334.
61. Schrader, op. cit., p.
62. Povest' vremennykh let, II, p. 300.

CHAPTER V

NATURE-WORSHIP

In contrast with the official mythology of Kievan Rus', which had reached the level of a fairly advanced polytheistic religion, the heathen elements in the beliefs and customs preserved by folklore show a rather primitive feature of the popular Rus' mythology, the worship of nature. The root of these beliefs is the principle of animism, which early man ascribed to all things surrounding him — animals, birds, trees, plants, rivers, lakes, fire, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the various natural phenomena; these he conceived as possessing a soul, and hence he attributed to them human motivation and interests. Nature-worship among the Eastern Slavs came from a deeply-rooted tradition which dates back to the prehistoric religions of the autochthonous populations. It evolved through the ages to achieve highly developed features of naturism which, to judge by its survivals in folklore, were characterized by poetically conceived natural divinities personifying the various forces and manifestations of nature.

The preservation of nature-worship in the folklore of the post-Christianization era was due to the tenacious adherence to old beliefs and customs by the masses of the unenlightened agricultural population. In its efforts to eradicate heathenism, the Orthodox Church, while successful in the case of the official mythology and its prime representatives, the Kievan pantheon of major deities, failed to penetrate to any great extent the beliefs and customs of the popular religion. As an act of compromise, the church tolerated a temporary state of coexistence of heathen and Christian ideologies; this period in the religious

history of Rus' is referred to in the chronicles as dvoverie, or "double-faith".¹ Many of the unyielding heathen customs and rites, such as those associated with the celebrations of Kolyada or Velykden', were later incorporated by the Church into its ritual and thus retained to the present day. Other heathen elements, though condemned by the Church, continued to exist in the folklore as late as the nineteenth century, when fortunately many of them were recorded by such ethnologists as A. Afanasiev, P. Chubyns'kyi and V. Hnatiuk.

The study of nature-worship in Rus' mythology, since this feature is very poorly attested in early literary records, must be based almost entirely on its survivals in the folklore of the Eastern Slavs. As may be expected, many of the heathen elements have lost their original meanings and have often become associated with foreign customs; consequently, the study of nature-worship, as of other features of Rus' mythology, is dependent on comparative mythology and folklore.

THE EARTH

At the core of Slavic nature-worship lies the early concept of a universal divine couple, the Sky-father and Earth-mother, who were conceived as the source of all nature. This divine relationship appears to be preserved in an old Ukrainian riddle "Tato vysokyi, mama shyroka," the answer to which is "the sky" and "the earth".² In an agricultural society the earth, as the fertile source of food and the sustainer of all life, is conceived as a living being, and is addressed as Mother Earth. In East Slavic legends the earth is sometimes compared to a human body, the rivers and streams being conceived as veins and arteries carrying her blood — the water.³ Her epithets, Mati-Syra-Zemlya,

Zemlya-Svyata-Mati, and Zemlya-Maty-Nasha, although incorporating the earth's concept of divine motherhood, fail to reveal whether or not she was conceived as a major goddess in Rus' mythology. It is tempting to identify this Mother Earth with the Kievan goddess Mokosh, but the evidence in favour of such a conjecture is far from convincing. Perhaps there existed in Rus' mythology another goddess associated with the Mother Earth cultus, who, for reasons unknown, was not included into the pantheon of the official deities, but who nevertheless was widely venerated in the popular religion. The case for the existence of such a goddess in Rus' mythology is supported by comparative mythology, which reveals that the Lithuanians worshipped an Earth-goddess called Zemyna,⁴ that there existed in the Thraco-Phrygian religion an Earth-goddess called Zemele,⁵ and that one of the names of the Grecian Earth-goddesses was Semele.⁶ From this it appears quite possible that the Eastern Slavs also venerated an Earth-goddess called Zemlya whose very name, due to the post-Christian degeneration of the goddess, was later preserved in the Slavic word zemlya, meaning "earth".

The veneration of the earth, as witnessed in the cult of Mati-Syra-Zemlya, is connected with agricultural operations and has as its object the promotion of the fertility of the land. In this cult the Eastern Slavs observed various calendar festivities and practiced certain rites intended to ensure an adequate rainfall and to remove the threat of storms and hail.⁷ Customs which reflect the sacred nature of the earth are widespread among the Eastern Slavs, and appear to be best preserved among the Russians. Mati-Syra-Zemlya in the life of a Russian peasant possessed an all-pervading power; she was invoked as witness in disputes, she served as the peasants' confidant to whom they confessed their sins and begged for

forgiveness, and she possessed oracular powers, displaying omens in various natural phenomena.⁸ In an especially interesting custom Russian peasants divined future harvests by digging a hole in the ground, applying their ears to it, and listening. If the sound heard reminded them of the noise made by the movement of a heavily laden sleigh over the snow, a bountiful harvest was predicted; on the other hand, if the noise heard sounded like that made by an empty sleigh, the peasants expected a poor harvest.⁹

PLANTS

The worship of plants appears to have been one of the most popular cults of Rus' mythology, judging by the numerous references to it in early literature. At the basis of plant worship lies the principle that all plants are sacred and possess life-giving and healing properties. In East Slavic folklore plantlife appears to be highly animated and personified; trees, plants, flowers, and grasses are able to speak and converse with one another, and in some cases with animals, birds, and even man.¹⁰ Moreover certain species of plants were believed to possess magic powers which could be used to drive away evil spirits, cure sicknesses, and make charms and incantations for witchcraft. It was believed that vydyukmak (poppy seeds) was especially effective against evil spirits, being utilized for that function in a Christmas custom of scattering the seeds about the farmyard.¹¹ Lyubystok (lovage) and polyn' (wormwood) were also effective in this capacity and were carried about by girls and boys respectively as protective charms against Rusalky.¹² Roots and leaves picked on the eve and in the early morning of the Kupalo feast were believed to possess even stronger mysterious powers, and were treasured by women and girls

for various purposes.¹³ Also the verba (willow) tree was imagined to possess magical powers and was planted around wells and springs to keep evil spirits from contaminating the waters.¹⁴ Its buds were eaten by children and sown with the crops in the fields to promote rapid growth.¹⁵ Even today the Ukrainians have preserved the custom of striking one's friends with a pussy willow shoot on Palm Sunday, in the belief that this action promotes health, wealth, and happiness.

The most sacred of the venerated trees among the Eastern Slavs appears to have been the oak, undoubtedly because of its association with Perun, the god of thunder. Other trees which possessed great respect and hence may have been the objects of veneration in the past included yasen' (ash), yavir (sycamore), klen (maple), lypa (lime-tree), bereza (birch), kalyna (cranberry), topolya (poplar), and verba (willow).¹⁶ According to the ethnographer S. Kylymnyk the bereza was symbolic of purity, the klen and lypa symbolized husband and wife, the topolya designated loneliness, and kalyna was the symbol of parting and death.¹⁷ Undoubtedly the respect associated with certain trees and their original veneration derive their origin from the cult of the "tree of life". In East Slavic cosmogonic legends such a tree plays a prominent role in the creation of the world.¹⁸ An old Ukrainian kolyada preserves this belief:

Todi ne bulo neba ni zemli,
Ano bulo synyeye more,
A sered morya zelenyi yavir,
Na yavoron'ku try holubon'ky,
Radon'ku radyat' yak svit snuvaty.¹⁹

Trees (or branches of trees), especially the bereza, were also decorated as idols and venerated in conjunction with such popular

festivities as Kupalo and Semik.²⁰ At Zeleni Svyata, a feast which appears to reflect an ancient holiday in honour of spring vegetation, Ukrainians still decorate their homes and courtyards with freshly cut tree-branches and various plants and flowers.²¹ It may be conjectured that such an important feast was originally personified by various vegetation divinities, perhaps even an individualized deity, the patron of spring vegetation; however, the customs associated with the feast preserve no definite indication to this effect. An interesting Ukrainian New Year rite illustrates the highly animated and personified conception of trees held by the early Eastern Slavs. The object of the rite is to "frighten" non-fertile fruit trees into bearing fruit; the master of the house approaches the tree with an axe, nicks it two or three times and threatens to cut it down; another member of the family, standing behind the tree, pleads in its name to be spared, promising a bountiful yield of fruit for the next year; the master then agrees to spare it and the tree's wounds are bandaged.²²

In an agricultural religion plant-worship also becomes associated with cultivated plants, the veneration of which is practiced under the guise of a personified Corn-spirit.²³ This spirit, moreover, sometimes incorporates the functions of a Fertility-god and even becomes associated with the ancestral spirits who are often believed to be the protectors of crops. Among the Eastern Slavs plant-worship in the form of a Corn-spirit is best preserved in the custom of venerating the last sheaf of harvested grain which was called Didukh.²⁴ This representation of the Corn-spirit was taken by the peasants into the village and placed in a granary where it was kept until Christmas eve; on this day it was placed on the pokuttya (a sacred spot in the house) and entreated, as the

embodiment of vegetation and ancestor spirits, to provide the family with a bountiful harvest for the coming year.²⁵

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

From archeological and literary sources it is known that the population of Kievan Rus' worshipped certain animals, notably the bull, the horse, and the goat. Moreover, it is probable that other animals such as the boar, the bear, and the wolf were also venerated.²⁶ The worship of the bull, which is so well attested archeologically, is also evident from information provided by folklore. The bull (or the ox) was treated with love and respect by the Slavs and considered as a noble animal. In many legends, ritual songs, and old kolyady the bull plays an important role, so much so that even Christian themes are often permeated by the "divine" qualities of the bull. Note this excerpt from a Ukrainian ko-lyada glorifying the birth of Jesus:

Da zyikhalos' da try voly,
Da try voly, try buyvoly,
Oy staly vony chmokhaty-hadaty,
Chym seye dzyetz'ko daruvaty.²⁷

The sacred nature of the bull is evidenced, moreover, in the wedding ritual of the Eastern Slavs; for example, the old ceremonial wedding songs ("Chy tse tur, chy turytsya, chy khorosha molodytsya"),²⁸ and the ancient concepts associated with the wedding-cake. The very name of this cake, korovay, according to Potebnya is an epithet of the byk-zhenykh (literally "the bull-groom") who is believed to have represented the patron god of marriage.²⁹

Veneration of the horse as a sacred animal is also attested archeologically in association with the solar deity. In the folklore similar

concepts are preserved in myths and legends, and the horse is often conceived with wings, or pulling the sun's chariot across the sky.³⁰ The sacred nature of the horse is perhaps also evident in the practice observed in some areas of Ukraine, where the horse was never used for heavy agricultural work (this being performed by the oxen), and was kept primarily for transportation and war.³¹

The goat also appears to have been venerated as a sacred animal of the Sun-god; it played a very prominent part in the vertep ceremonies during the Kolyada cycle, wherein it was sometimes featured in a drama depicting the dying and reviving attributes of the sun.³² In this function the goat is preserved in a White Russian song depicting the life-giving and fertilizing properties of the spring sun:

Dze koza khodzits', tam zhito rodzits',
Dze koza khvostom, tam zhito kustom,
Dze koza nogoyu, tam zhito kopoyu,
Dze koza rogom, tam zhito stogom.³³

The veneration of the bear, boar, and wolf is also evident, although these animals do not appear to have enjoyed the same popularity as the bull, the horse, and the goat. The bear and the boar are well-attested archeologically, the former being associated with clay fetishes representing bears' paws, and the latter with numerous tusks found in Kievan burials.³⁴ The folklore, however, preserves few features which might be traced back to the heathen veneration of these animals. The most prominent examples of the sacred nature of the bear are preserved in the amiable Ukrainian epithets for bear, Dyad'ko or Vuyko (meaning "Uncle"), and in an ancient White Russian wedding rite, where the mother of the groom, dressed in a fur coat, greeted the young couple with a toast of mead.³⁵ As for the wolf, it is difficult to establish whether

or not it was venerated in Kievan Rus' since the only evidence of any mysterious powers was its uncanny relationship with werewolves.

In addition to the above mentioned animals there were others, such as the dog, the cat, mice, and serpents, which were imagined to possess strange powers or were associated with strange beliefs: the dog was believed to possess the ability to recognize and give warning of the presence of evil spirits;³⁶ cats, especially black ones, were associated with witches and were often believed to represent evil forces;³⁷ and mice and serpents, perhaps due to their frequent appearance in early Slavic homes, were believed to embody the souls of deceased ancestors, and were often conceived as tutelary spirits.³⁸

The veneration of certain birds is also very strongly evidenced in East Slavic folklore, perhaps more so than animal-worship. Such birds as storks, cuckoos, pigeons, swallows, and roosters were beloved and welcomed because they were associated with good omens.³⁹ Hence, when a stork built his nest on the house, this represented a good omen. Ukrainian peasants often tried to encourage the storks to build their nests on houses by providing special platforms for the nest. Destruction of a stork's nest provoked serious repercussions, for it was believed that the stork would return and set the house on fire.⁴⁰ Of other birds, swallows were considered to be the heralds of spring and were believed to be active participants in man's fate; roosters were believed to be symbols of the sun, and their crowing, which heralded the rising sun, was believed to halt the activities of the forces of darkness and evil; and pigeons or doves, which are portrayed as the creators of the world in some Ukrainian cosmogonic legends, were commonly conceived as the symbols of love.⁴¹ The most popular bird,

however, seems to have been the cuckoo ("nad synu zozulen'ku, na sviti nema"),⁴² probably because of the belief that it possessed the ability to foresee future events. As is evident from an old Ukrainian song, the cuckoo was often requested to predict how long a person would live:

Zozul'o, zozul'o, zakuy meni,
Skil'ky rokiv zhyty budu!⁴³

Its answer was derived from the number of calls ("cuckoos") sung by the bird, each call representing a year of life.

It is very probable that the veneration of some birds as good omens was a result of their association with the sun. Their arrival in the spring was undoubtedly identified with the spring rebirth of the sun; indeed, the revitalization of the sun's powers of procreation was probably symbolized in the laying of their eggs. In fact it is very probable that the similarity in appearance between the egg yolk and the sun, which was often represented by a yellow disk, was the determining factor in the sacred nature of these birds. Thus the egg and especially the pysanka (Easter egg) were probably thought of as emblems of the sun.

In addition to the birds of good omen, the Eastern Slavs also believed in birds of evil omen, which included the owl, the hawk, and the crow.⁴⁴ These represented the symbols of death and darkness, and hence their appearance on the roof of one's home forecasted evil tidings. It was believed that if the call of these birds resembled "pokhovav-pokhovav", someone in the family was going to die.⁴⁵ To rid themselves of these evil omens and to cleanse the village of the evil spirits, disease, and death with which these birds were associated, the Ukrainians practiced an annual, spring custom called honyty shulyaka ("chasing the hawk"): a large, armed expedition would venture into the forest and shoot as many of these birds

as possible. The bodies of these birds were gathered and ceremoniously burned, and their ashes buried, to the general rejoicing of all present.⁴⁶ This custom is an obvious example of the use of sympathetic magic intended to purify the village after the winter.⁴⁷

WATER

In early religions water was believed to be a divine element, probably because of its mysterious movement and its life-giving powers. The great significance of water in ancient East Slavic beliefs is noted in old legends and songs, where water is often imagined as the primeval element from which the earth was created; or where it joins with fire to replace the sky and earth as the divine couple.⁴⁸ In the former function water is attested in the following Ukrainian kolyada about the creation of the universe:

A yak to bulo z pochatku svita,
Ne bulo tohdy neba ni zemli,
A lyshen' bulo synyeye more.⁴⁹

Water-worship is also well-attested in ancient Rus' chronicles and foreign accounts; these record its worship both in the form of a divine element and in the form of various nymphs and water divinities associated with particular springs, wells, streams, or rivers. As a divine element, water appears to have been worshipped for two very important functions -- as a fertility agent and as a purifying agent. In its function of a fertility agent, water was venerated in Rus' at many spring feasts, during which ritual ceremonies were performed, designed to promote rainfall and ensure the fecundity of the earth. These ceremonies usually consisted of pouring water over women or young girls (obviously

personifying the earth) who were decorated with flowers and green foliage.⁵⁰ Similar "rain-charm" customs are preserved in the folklore, but these appear to have lost their original "fertility" meaning, becoming associated with the promotion of health and well-being in general. In the spring and summer feasts, the bathing and sprinkling rites, as is the case also with oblyvannya customs at Easter, are restricted to the young, and were believed to promote rapid growth, good health, and an early and happy marriage.⁵¹

It is possible that the bathing and sprinkling ceremonies had another purpose too — purification. In its function of a purifying agent, water was considered a universal cleanser, and hence capable of washing away the contagion of evil spirits, disease and death; thus water was used in various purification ceremonies, such as ablutions for the sick, washing the dead, and sprinkling and bathing rites during child-birth and marriage.⁵²

Folklore preserves the beliefs that certain waters were more powerful than others for the purpose of magical fertility and purification rites. The most powerful water associated with fertility uses was zhyva voda ("live-water") which was obtained from the first spring thunder-shower.⁵³ It was believed that anyone who drank this magic liquid would be very healthy and would acquire great strength. Another source of water with magical powers was the feast of Kupalo; it was believed that during the night of the feast waters possessed mysterious powers, and hence they were stored and preserved to be used throughout the year for various purification ceremonies, especially to keep evil spirits away.⁵⁴

Water-worship among the Eastern Slavs also included the veneration of personified water-spirits. These spirits, who were believed to dwell

in rivers, wells, and lakes, consisted of nature divinities and malicious spirits of drowned people,⁵⁵ and even individualized deities associated with larger bodies of water, such as Dnipro-Slovuta, Tykhyi-Don-Ivanovych, and Volga-Volkhv.⁵⁶ In the worship of these spirits, Eastern Slavs practiced various propitiatory rites. Till recently, in early spring peasants in Ukraine used to form processions, led by the village priest, to visit the local wells, springs, marshes, and lakes, which the priest blessed with holy water.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly these rites are survivals of heathen ceremonies which were designed to purify the waters, chase away the evil spirits, and propitiate the good ones. River fords were also blessed, where in addition to holy water such ancient charms as nechay-zillya and tatar-zillya were used to propitiate the river divinities and to make the river-crossings safe.⁵⁸

FIRE

Fire-worship in ancient religions was considered inseparable from nature-worship, for the concept of fire included both the heavenly fire (the sun) and the terrestrial fire. The identification of the earthly fire with the heavenly fire is common to most mythologies, and the man-made fire appears as a gift from the gods to man. Hence the earthly fire divinity is very seldom found as a regular member of a mythological pantheon, and is often worshipped in the form of an impersonal minor divinity.

In Rus' mythology the god of fire was Svarozhych, the brother of the Sun-god Dazhboh. The very name for fire — ohon' or ogon' — appears to be derived from the Vedic Fire-god Agni, but since there is little resemblance in the functions and attributes of the two deities, it is more probably derived from a common Indo-European word, as witnessed in the

Latin ignis. In folklore fire was identified with the tutelary spirit of the household, and was worshipped in the form of the hearth or ochah.⁵⁹ Its sacred nature and heavenly origin are reflected in the Ukrainian taboo substitutions for ohon', which was referred to by the attributes bohatyi and bahattya (derived from the word boh, meaning "god"). For this reason fire was always loved and respected, and it was forbidden to whistle, shout, or swear when the fire was being lit.⁶⁰ Furthermore, whenever the hearth was not in use it was swept out with a clean broom, and a dry log and a pot of water were deposited within it, so that it would have food and water.⁶¹

Fire-worship is also apparent in other ancient customs preserved in folklore. During the winter, spring, and summer feasts the Eastern Slavs lit large bonfires which were probably symbolic of the Sun-god.⁶² The feast of Kupalo in addition to the bonfires, featured burning wheels which the participants rolled downhill, attempting to hit the bonfires with them.⁶³ This rite appears to represent a symbolic recreation of the sun's course across the heavens. It was believed that if the burning wheel collided with the bonfire, it was a good omen, and hence good harvests were forecast. In addition to their solar significance the bonfires appear to have been associated with other functions. Among the rites practiced at many of the feasts, especially at the Kupalo celebration, was a ritual of jumping over the bonfires.⁶⁴ This rite is similar to the spring custom of driving cattle, on their way to pasture for the first time, over a small fire set in the courtyard gate.⁶⁵ Judging from these customs it appears that the fire was also conceived as a purifying agent, and that the rite of jumping over it, as well as the custom of driving cattle across it, were probably intended to cleanse and burn

away the evil spirits accumulated over the winter. It is worth noting that all these ritual fires were started by zhyvyi ohon' or bozhyi ohon' (meaning a "live fire" or "divine fire").⁶⁶ Such a fire was obtained by the painstaking process of rubbing two sticks together and was believed to possess great magical powers. It is interesting to note that at the conclusion of feasts the participants took care to put out the flames and bury the ashes, so that they could not be put to evil use by any witches or werewolves who found them.⁶⁷

THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

The worship of heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, is evidenced in the religions of all agricultural societies, for they provided a natural calendar by which man could learn to understand nature and have a foreknowledge of the changing and recurring seasons. Thanks to this knowledge man was able to prepare himself to perform the necessary operations of soil cultivation and thus ensure his food supply.

It has been noted above that in Rus' mythology the worship of the sun was very important, and that at least three major deities seem to personify this heavenly body. As late as two centuries after the adoption of Christianity the people of Rus', according to an Arab historian, were confirmed sun-worshippers.⁶⁸ This veneration of the sun for its all-important, life-giving properties is also well preserved in the folklore of the Eastern Slavs.

The Slavs imagined the sun as a heavenly fire, and represented it most often in the form of a burning circle, a disk, or a wheel, riding in a horse-drawn chariot for its daily journey across the sky.⁶⁹ In Russian legends the sun was conceived as dwelling within a golden palace

in an eastern land of eternal summer and abundance. The Auroras, who were believed to be the sun's daughters, helped the sun in his task, the *Utrennyaya Zorya* (Aurora of the Morning) sending him off on his journey in the morning and the *Vechernyaya Zorya* (Aurora of the Evening) welcoming him back at night.⁷⁰ In some Ukrainian legends the sun is described as rising in the morning out of an eastern sea, where it is believed to bathe prior to beginning its journey: "Sontse v mori sya kupaye."⁷¹ In other Ukrainian legends the sun is represented as living in an enchanting eastern land with a beautiful mistress who is called Mors'ka pani (Lady of the sea). She is believed to wash his face every morning with sea-water so that he would shine brightly during the day.⁷² It is very probable that the Mors'ka pani represents the Aurora of the Morning, in which case she may be identified with *Utrennyaya Zorya*, who is also conceived sometimes as the sweetheart or the wife of the sun. For the most part, however, East Slavic folklore conceives of the sun as a feminine personality. the moon as the sun's husband, and the stars as their children: "Yasne sontse to hospodynya, yasnyi misyats' to hospodar, yasni zvizdy to yoho ditky."⁷³ Folklore also preserves the association of the sun with the moon and the rain, which are represented as the companions of the sun. In some old Ukrainian kolyady the sun, the moon, and the rain appear as three brothers:

Z-za 'neyi hory, z-za vysokoyi
Vydni vykhodyat' tr'okh brativ ridnykh:
Yeden brattseyko -- svitle soneyko,
Druhyi brattseyko -- yasen misyachok,
Tretyi brattseyko -- droben dozhdeyko.⁷⁴

In addition the sun was conceived as sontse pravedne, the champion of goodness and righteousness (probably due to the fact that solar rays

penetrate everywhere and overcome the forces of darkness and evil). In this capacity it was often invoked by the Slavs as a witness to oaths, as in "sontse by tya pobylo".⁷⁵

The moon also played an important role in the early civilizations, and due to its regular changes in appearance became known as the 'measurer of time'. Although the East Slavic folklore preserves a tremendous amount of material denoting moon-worship, it is impossible to say with certainty that a Moon-god existed as a major deity in the Rus' mythology. If such a god was known to Rus' mythology (and the indications suggest that he must have been), he was either known under the name of one of the mysterious gods in Volodymyr's pantheon, or under some other name which failed to come down to us in association with the god and his functions. The latter possibility appears the more probable one, and the name which best suits the Moon-god is Misyats'. In Ukrainian misyats' still means "moon", while in Russian the name mesyats is retained in the moon-derived concept of "month". In Polish the name for "moon" is księżyc which also has the meaning "prince". This linguistic evidence may denote that the Moon-god was conceived as an important deity, for which reason his name became associated with taboo. It may be that, like the proposed Earth-goddess Zemlya, the Moon-god Misyats' also was retained in the name of the natural manifestation he personified.

In folklore the moon is often associated with such animals as the bull and the ram, due to its horn-like appearance at certain stages. Thus the "horned" characteristic of the moon is well-attested in various sayings and songs, for example the Russian "Lysyi vol vskvoz' plot sya divit" or the Ukrainian "Baran v khlivi, rohy na stini".⁷⁶ In some songs the moon is represented as a heavenly shepherd who looks after his heavenly flocks.

the stars: "Pole nemerene, ovtse neschitane, pastukh rohatyi".⁷⁷ The moon was also imagined to be endowed with mysterious powers which it could impart to its worshippers. Ukrainian peasants believed that children born under a new moon would live a long and happy life, and that plants and flowers picked at night under a new moon possessed magical powers, and could be used as a protection against evil charms and disease.⁷⁸ This association of health with magic moonlight is evident in a Russian supplication to the full moon: "Batyushka svetel mesyats! Zoloty roga tebe na stoyane, a mne na zdorov'e!"⁷⁹ Furthermore, the moon was believed to possess oracular powers, and the Eastern Slavs often predicted future events by the various colors appearing on the moon: a red moon meant war; a blue one, hunger; and a bright yellow or gold moon was believed to forecast a rich harvest.⁸⁰

In contrast to the worship of the sun and the moon, which are attested by a wealth of material in folklore, the worship of the stars is less richly evidenced. Nevertheless there are many legends associated with the stars, wherein they appear as heavenly flocks, scattered glowing coals, and most often as heavenly fires in the form of candles.⁸¹ In this form they were conceived by Ukrainians who believed that when a man was born a star lit up in the heavens; hence, for every human being on the earth there was a star flickering in the sky. Upon the death of a person, they believed that his star either fell from the heavens or was otherwise extinguished. To see a falling star at night was considered to be a lucky omen.⁸² Since there is a close relationship in East Slavic beliefs between stars and human destiny, the stars were also used by experts as means of foretelling people's future.⁸³

THE SEASONS

The worship of nature is also readily evident in the division of the year into seasons and the beliefs and customs associated with them. It appears that the earliest division of the year by the Eastern Slavs, as by most Indo-European peoples, was into two parts — the cold season, marked by the winter solstice, and the warm season, marked by the summer solstice. This primeval concept is preserved in the East Slavic folklore in the feast of Stritennya; on this day, the fifteenth of February, it was believed that Zyma (winter) and Lito (summer) met.⁸⁴ The former was personified by an ugly old woman dressed in rags and carrying a potful of ice, and the latter by a beautiful young girl decorated with flowers and carrying a sheaf of grain. The peasants believed that when the two met they argued with each other as to which of the two would carry on from there. If by evening the weather showed a trend for the warmer, Lito had won the argument, but if by evening it became colder, Zyma had won and would remain for some time to come.

Associated with the wintry season in the East Slavic beliefs were the personifications of its natural phenomena, poetically conceived in the form of nature-spirits with human appearances. In addition to the above-mentioned personification of Zyma, these included the following:⁸⁵ Did-Moroz, who as the personification of frost was believed to take the form of a rotund old man with a long white beard, wearing a large fur coat covered with snow; Snihoviy, a stout muzhyk also dressed in a fur coat, who was believed to blow the snow into drifts; Zaviryukha, a good-looking molodytsya, who, as the wife of Snihoviy, was believed to personify the heavy snowfall; and Metelytsya, a pert young girl with a very

mischievous disposition, who was believed to personify the snowstorm and to take great pleasure in blinding unfortunate travellers with thick, whirling snow. In addition to the personified winter phenomena, the Eastern Slavs probably venerated other natural phenomena, however these do not appear to have been personified by nature spirits in human form.

The idea of a third season, spring, probably developed at a later stage of civilization. In East Slavic folklore this most beautiful of seasons, representing the rebirth of nature from its dormant existence during the winter, was personified by Vesna, a young maiden of exceptional beauty, who was conceived dressed in white clothing, decorated with foliage, and wearing a crown of flowers on her head.⁸⁶ In Ukrainian customs the arrival of Vesna was greeted with songs, dances, and games, called vesnyanky-hayivky. The most common theme of the vesnyanky is the association of Vesna with beauty and love.⁸⁷ In many songs she is venerated by maidens as the grantor of feminine pulchritude:

Rannya vesna vskresla,
Shcho zhes' nam prynesla?
Prynesla rosu — divots'ku krasu,
Divots'ka krasa, yak na vesni rosa,
V medu sya kupala, v vyni vyplyvala.⁸⁸

In White Russian customs spring was venerated in a special feast called Lyalya (also Lelya), wherein it was personified by the most beautiful girl in the village who was decorated with flowers and addressed as "Lyalya" in the ceremonies.⁸⁹ It is possible that this custom reflects an early association of spring with an individualized goddess. There appears to be, furthermore, a linguistic connection between Lyalya and an uncertain divinity called Lada, whom some scholars have suggested to be an early goddess of spring, beauty and love.⁹⁰ It is interesting to note

that the root lad- is also found in the Czech lada, meaning "beauty"; in the Polish ładny, meaning "beautiful"; and in the Old Slavonic terms lad and lada, denoting "husband" and "wife", lado meaning "beautiful", and lyada, denoting the "virgin soil". From the above there appears to be an almost direct connection between the etymology of the words denoting beauty, love, and virgin soil, and the name and functions of the suggested goddess of spring Lada.

The most recently conceived season of the year appears to have been the agricultural season of harvest — the fall. Its comparatively recent origin is noticeable in the East Slavic fall cycle of calendar feasts, which are both fewer in number and less important than those of the winter, summer, and spring cycles. Among the Eastern Slavs the fall or osin' (osen') was the season of minor feasts called praznyky, which celebrated the end of the agricultural year. It is worthy of note that in the winter cycle of feasts there exists an ancient holiday called Ovsen' or Usen', the chief purpose of which is to foresee and influence next year's harvest.⁹¹ Perhaps this holiday originally formed the main feast of the fall cycle and was held in honour of a god of harvest, only later being transferred to the winter cycle. This in fact may be the case, for in White Russian folklore the fall is personified by a nature spirit called Zhycen', who is conceived as a little old man with a grey beard, and acts in the capacity of a Corn-spirit.⁹²

CALENDAR FESTIVALS

Nature-worship among the Eastern Slavs centered about a series of annual feasts, which were marked by the various periods of the solar cycle and its accompanying seasonal manifestations of nature. The main

purpose of these calendar festivals was to perform magical acts by which cosmic forces and nature divinities might be influenced to produce bountiful harvests and ensure man's safety and well-being. As in other agricultural religions, these feasts were divided into winter, spring, summer, and fall cycles organized about the winter solstice, the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, and the autumnal equinox.

The main feast of the winter cycle was the Kolyada, which was celebrated on the day of the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. This feast is also known by its older name Krachun or Korochun⁹³—a name which was probably derived from the adjective kratkiy or korotkyi, meaning "short" or "brief". Hence, the name Korochun may have been a descriptive epithet of an ancient male divinity personifying the shortest day of the year.

The name Kolyada is derived by most scholars from the Graeco-Roman winter festival calendae (in Greek kalandai), and is believed to have been adopted by the Slavs from the Danube River area.⁹⁴ There is, however, another interpretation of the name Kolyada, by which it is derived from the Slavic word kolo, meaning "wheel" or "circle".⁹⁵ The fact that the ritual songs associated with this feast, the kolyady, are known to have been performed during ritual round dances, indicates that the name Kolyada may be interpreted as a ceremonial dance and song. It is interesting to note that the parallel English form "carol" originally meant "a round dance accompanied by song".⁹⁶ Furthermore, the preservation in the folklore of the related custom of visiting all the households in the village with a girl dressed in white or a feminine image called the Kolyada, supports the Slavic derivation of the name of the feast.⁹⁷ It is quite probable that the name Kolyada at

one time was associated with a female divinity personifying the feast, who was probably conceived as Korochun's counterpart.

After Stritennya, the day when winter met summer, began the spring cycle of feasts. As their main features the spring feasts incorporated the worship of the procreative powers of the spring sun, the veneration of the regenerative forces of nature, magical rites designed to ensure the successful completion of agricultural activities associated with the sowing of crops, and the worship of ancestors. In the case of this last feature, the worship of ancestors, the beliefs and customs associated with them had become so intermingled with the veneration of nature divinities that frequently they are scarcely recognizable.

First of the spring feasts was the ritual drowning of Marena. The ceremony represents a custom which is common to many Indo-European folklores; its intention appears to have been to rid the village of the winter, and the death and disease associated with it.⁹⁸ In the East Slavic ceremony, a straw image of a woman was drowned to the accompaniment of ritual songs and games.⁹⁹ This custom, however, appears to have lost its original meaning in some regions and was often combined with the summer feast of Kupalo.¹⁰⁰

Another of the festivals introducing spring was the feast of Yarylo. The name of this holiday is also the name of the divinity Yarylo who personified this feast, and is derived from the adjective yaryi, meaning "burning", "ardent", or "bright". Hence the divinity Yarylo probably personified the spring sun, the feast being held in honour of its awakened powers of procreation. Judging from some of the customs preserved in the fall feast of Yarylo, where the god personifies the dying sun, the veneration of Yarylo was probably originally

associated with erotic motives and various forms of licence. In White Russia, where the Yarylo cult is best preserved, the god is conceived in legends as a handsome youth dressed in white, crowned with a garland, and riding a white horse; in his right hand he holds a human head, and in his left hand, a sheaf of grain.¹⁰¹ It appears, therefore, that in his function as the personification of the spring sun Yarylo also acted as a Corn-spirit, promoting fertility in the fields.

The most important and most popular of the spring festivals was the feast of Velykden'. The name of this holiday is etymologically derived from the words velykyi den', and hence, by analogy with the feast of Korochun, probably represented the veneration of the longest day of the year, the summer solstice. It is worthy of note that many of the features of this heathen feast were later incorporated into the Christian feast of Easter, probably due to its importance in the yearly cycle and its proximity to the Christian holiday. The most prominent of these include the traditional hayilky and pysanky, and the custom of lighting huge bonfires on the eve of the feast.¹⁰² From the symbolism evidenced in the bonfires and the designs of the pysanky, the solar-orientated content of hayilky, and the etymological derivation of the very name Velykden', it is readily seen that this feast originally represented a celebration in honour of the Sun-god at the moment of his greatest power.

In the summer cycle of feasts the main theme appears to be the veneration of nature in its full bloom. Most of these feasts, such as Rusalya, Bereza, Semik, and Topolya, may be grouped together on the basis of similarity of content — their ceremonies display the veneration of a young girl, a feminine image made of straw, or a small tree decorated with flowers and dressed in woman's clothing, and are

characterized by ritual dances and songs (khorovody) glorifying the beauty of nature and petitioning the nature-spirits for good weather and bountiful harvests.¹⁰³ The preservation of the veneration of feminine images during these feasts very probably denotes the ancient association of these feasts with feminine divinities personifying nature, quite possibly even a goddess of summer.

The best preserved feast of heathen origin in East Slavic folklore is the feast of Kupalo, celebrated on the eve of the summer solstice. The name Kupalo is usually derived from the verb kupaty, meaning "to bathe", and perhaps represents the personification of the main features of the feast — ceremonial bathing and ablutions. It is interesting to note that in time this feast became known as Ivana Kupala, very probably due to the association of the heathen ritual of bathing with the Christian parallel as personified by Ivan Khrestytel' (John the Baptist).¹⁰⁴ As well as the ritual bathing, which was to all appearance intended to purify the worshiper and bring him good health and fortune, the feast also incorporated solar symbolism in the form of bonfires and burning wheels; purification by fire, as seen in the custom of leaping over the fire; the veneration of plants, which on that night acquired mysterious powers; and various forms of divination.¹⁰⁵

The fall cycle of feasts appears to have been composed of three major holidays: Zazhynky, which was an agricultural feast pertaining to harvesting ceremonies and the preservation of the Corn-spirit in the form of Didukh, and Kostrubon'ko and Yarylo, which were associated with the dying powers of nature. The last two, which were celebrated at the time of the autumnal equinox, are very similar to each other in both theme and ceremonial; they were characterized by the ritual burial,

burning, or drowning of a straw effigy denoting an old man, amid the exaggerated lamentations of the worshipers.¹⁰⁶ This custom undoubtedly represents the belief in the declining powers of the fall sun, as evidenced in the weakening of the sun's rays and the dying of vegetation. The fall feast of Yarylo differed somewhat from that of Kostrubon'ko by its erotic motives. In some regions of Russia the image of Yarylo was characterized by a large phallus, and the funeral was accompanied by hysterical lamentations on the part of the women. After the funeral the mourners held a celebration marked by wild rejoicing and various forms of licence.¹⁰⁷

FOOTNOTES

1. See L.Niederle, Slavyanskíe drevnosti (Moscow, 1956), p. 269.
2. From P.Chubinskiy, Trudy etnograficheskoy-statisticheskoy ekspiditsii v Zapadno-russkiy kray (St. Petersburg, 1872), I, p. 311., according to H.Máchal, Nákres Slovanského bájeslovi (Prague, 1891), p. 12.
3. Chubinskiy, op. cit., I. pp. 36-38, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 13.
4. See The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, J.Hastings ed., (Edinburgh, 1927), II, p. 38.
5. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XII, p. 167.
6. Note that the Greek goddess Semele is believed to have been adopted from the Thraco-Phrygians. Ibid.
7. On rain charms in E.Slavic folklore see section on Water below.
8. See G.Alexinsky, "Slavonic Mythology," Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (New York, 1959), p. 297.
9. Ibid.
10. N.Kostomarov, Slavyanskaya mifologiya (Kiev, 1847), p. 60.
11. See S.Kylymnyk, Ukrayins'kyi rik v narodnikh zvychayakh (Winnipeg, 1955), I, p. 27.

12. Ibid., IV, p. 40.
13. Ibid., IV, p. 113.
14. Ibid., III, p. 47.
15. Ibid., III, p. 53.
16. Ibid., IV, pp. 22-24.
17. Ibid.
18. See M.Hrushevsky, Istoriya ukrayins'koyi literatury (New York, 1960), IV, pp. 370-380.
19. Ibid., IV, p. 374.
20. Kylymnyk, op. cit., IV, p. 36.
21. Ibid., IV, p. 24.
22. From Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, p. 164.
23. See J.G.Frazer, The New Golden Bough, T.H.Gaster ed., (Garden City N.Y., 1961), pp. 229-235.
24. Kylymnyk, op. cit., I, p.23.
25. Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, p. 150.
26. The conjecture that these animals were probably venerated in Kievan Rus' mythology is based almost entirely on the fact that these animals are very popular in East Slavic folk tales.
27. Hrushevsky, op. cit., p. 486.
28. From Kh.Vovk, Studii z ukrayins'koyi etnohrafii ta antropologii (Prague), p. 280, according to B.Kravciv, Do problemy Tura-Svaroha-Troyana (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 12-13.
29. A.Potebnya, Etymologiya, III, p. 66, according to A.G.Preobrazhenskiy, Etymologicheskii slovar' russkogo yasyka (Moscow, 1959), I, p. 396.
30. Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, pp. 280-281 and 315-316.
31. See Kostomarov, op. cit., p. 63.
32. See Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, p. 156.
33. N.Lavrov, "Religiya i tserkov'," Istoriya kul'tury Drevney Rusi (Moscow, 1951), II, p. 65.

34. Ibid., pp. 63-65.
35. See N.M.Nikol'skiy, Proiskhozhdenie i istoriya belorusskoy svadebnoy obryadnosti (Minsk, 1956), p. 96.
36. See Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, I.Franko ed., (Lviv, 1898), V, p. 176.
37. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, V.Hnatiuk ed., (Lviv, 1912), XXXIII, pp. 103-106.
38. See Kostomarov, op. cit., p. 66.
39. Ibid., p. 61.
40. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, V, p. 171.
41. Kostomarov, loc. cit.
42. Ibid.
43. Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, p. 316.
44. Kostomarov, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
45. Kylymnyk, loc. cit.
46. Ibid., IV, p. 38. It is interesting to note that a parallel custom, called "hunting the gowk", is also preserved in Scotland. See O.Voropay, Zvychayi nashoho narodu (Munich, 1958), I, p. 274.
47. Parallel customs are evidenced in other European folklores. See Frazer, op. cit., pp. 293-295.
48. The belief in a divine couple consisting of a Fire-father and a Water-mother is preserved among Ukrainian Hutsuls. See Machal, op. cit., p. 10.
49. Hrushevsky, op. cit., IV, pp. 374-381, lists five or six versions of the cosmogonic kolyada, wherein water appears as the primeval element.
50. See R.Jakobson, "Slavic Mythology," Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend (New York, 1950), II, p. 1026.
51. Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, pp. 128, 137.
52. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XII, p. 706.
53. Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, pp. 144-145.
54. Ibid., III, p. 147.

55. For a discussion of various water divinities see chapter on Demonology, below.

56. See Hrushevsky, op. cit., IV, pp. 559, 162, and 102.

57. Kylymnyk, loc. cit.

58. Ibid., IV, p. 63.

59. E.V. Anichkov, Yazychestvo i Drevnyaya Rus' (St. Petersburg, 1914), p. 291.

60. Alexinsky, op. cit., p. 294.

61. Máchal, op. cit., p. 151.

62. Similar practice of lighting large fires during calendar festivals is also evidenced in other European folklores. See Frazer, op. cit., pp. 350-366.

63. Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, p. 96.

64. Ibid., IV, p. 107.

65. Ibid., III, pp. 332-333.

66. From A. Afanasiev, Poeticheskie vozzreniya Slavyan na prirodu (Moscow, 1866), I, p. 57, according to Machal, op. cit., p. 150.

67. Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, p. 107.

68. The writings of Ibraim Ben Vesif-Shakh record that even as late as the end of the twelfth century the Eastern Slavs continued to worship heavenly bodies, especially the sun. According to Máchal, op. cit., p. 39.

69. From Afanasiev, op. cit., I, p. 603, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 42.

70. Alexinsky, op. cit., pp. 296-697.

71. From Afanasiev, op. cit., II, p. 124, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 42.

72. Chubinskiy, op. cit., I, pp. 3-4, from Máchal, op. cit., p. 42.

73. Afanasiev, op. cit., I, p. 79, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 47.

74. Hrushevsky, op. cit., IV, p. 332.

75. Afanasiev, op. cit., I, p. 66, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 48.

76. Afanasiev, op. cit., I, p. 660, according to Máchal op. cit., p. 49.
77. From Afanasiev, op. cit., I, pp. 691-692, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 49.
78. From Chubinskiy, op. cit., I, pp. 9-10, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 49.
79. Afanasiev, op. cit., I, p. 72, from Máchal, op. cit., p. 54.
80. From Chubinskiy, op. cit., I, pp. 7-8, according to Máchal op. cit., p. 55.
81. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, p. 781, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 58.
82. From Chubinskiy, op. cit., I, p. 14, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 59.
83. Afanasiev, op. cit., III, pp. 321-323, from Máchal, op. cit., p. 59.
84. See Voropay, op. cit., I, pp. 197-200.
85. From a description by Lukiya Havrylyuk, according to Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, pp. 271-274.
86. See Voropay, op. cit., I, pp. 189-197 and 270-272.
87. Ibid., I, pp. 300-338.
88. Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, p. 170.
89. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar', Published by Brokhaus-Efron, (St. Petersburg, 1900), VII, p. 108.
90. See Kostomarov, op. cit., p. 27. He proposes that Lada was conceived as the mother of Lelya and Lel', and that the latter probably personified the spring sun. In Ukrainian lelity means "to shine", "to glow", or "to glitter".
91. Niederle, op. cit., p. 295.
92. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, pp. 679-681, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 205.
93. From Kylymnyk, op. cit., I, p. 11.
94. See Hrushevsky, op. cit., I, pp. 147-148.
95. See G. Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia (Oxford, 1959), pp. 111.

96. Ibid., p. 112.

97. See Niederle, op. cit., p. 294.

98. Similar mock-funerals in the form of drowning, burying, or burning an image personifying the winter are found throughout Europe. See Frazer, op. cit., pp. 143-155.

99. Niederle, op. cit., p. 295.

100. See Kylymnyk, op. cit., IV, pp. 116-118.

101. See Voropay, op. cit., I, p. 291.

102. See Kylymnyk, op. cit., III, pp. 30-225.

103. Ibid., IV, pp. 32-40.

104. See Kostomarov, op. cit., pp. 83-95.

105. See Kylymnyk, op. cit., IV, pp. 99-149.

106. See Máchal, op. cit., pp. 203-204.

107. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar', LXXXII, pp. 807-808.

CHAPTER VI

DEMONOLOGY

The East Slavic folklore possesses a very rich and interesting demonology, which reflects, in part, concepts of very early origin. It consists of a system of beliefs about various minor divinities, spirits, demons, and sorcerers who were imagined to populate the earth and to have a greater or smaller influence in the life of man. Many of these spirits were respected and venerated as the souls of deceased ancestors and were believed to act in the capacity of tutelary divinities; others appear to have personified various manifestations of nature and hence probably represented nature divinities; still others appeared in the form of evil and dangerous human beings who possessed supernatural powers, and were regarded as fiends and demons; and finally, some were believed to be people of great wisdom who had mastered the secrets of nature, and who could be persuaded to use them to man's benefit. It is hazardous, however, to conjecture to what extent the demonology reflects the pre-Christian religion of Kievan Rus', for many of the associated beliefs had lost their original meaning and had become incrustated over the ages with foreign and Christian elements. Thus the study of the East Slavic demonology although it does not contribute much to the elucidation of any specific features of Rus' mythology, nevertheless provides a rich and colorful image of the heathen religious system which it survives.

I. ANCESTOR-SPIRITS

The primary function of the ancestor-spirits in East Slavic beliefs appears to have been the protection of the home and the members of their

family; thus they may be classified as tutelary spirits or penates. In early chronicles ancestor-worship is identified with the veneration of Rod and Rozhanytsya.¹ Judging from the words rod, meaning "clan", and rodyty, which means "to bear" or "to give birth", it appears that Rod may be identified with the Latin word gens, which in addition to denoting "clan" also designated the male element in the "generation" of the clan. Hence Rozhanytsya may be interpreted as Rod's counterpart, and identified with the Latin genetrix (the female counterpart of gens).² This derivation of the names of the two spirits is substantiated by a fifteenth century Russian manuscript in which an account designating Rod as the creator of man is opposed by one which designates God as his creator.³ Furthermore, the folklore has preserved in myths the memory of Rod in the form of a heavenly divinity who was believed to throw lumps of earth from the sky; from these clods men were believed to have originated.⁴

In addition to her function as the genetrix of the clan, Rozhanytsya or Rozhdenytsya was also conceived as a feminine divinity who assigned a child's destiny at its birth and determined its manner of life.⁵ In this function Rozhanytsya appeared as beautiful maiden or a gentle and kind elderly woman; the baby's parents made offers to her in order to induce the divinity to assign the child a favourable destiny.⁶

It appears, therefore, that the early East Slavic form of ancestor-worship consisted of the veneration of the clan's prashchury or progenitors; propitiation of these tutelary spirits, according to the chronicles, included such offerings as bread, cheese, honey, and their favorite food, kutya.⁷

In folklore the worship of ancestor spirits is preserved in the

form of a domestic divinity called Domovyk (also known as Domovoy, Did, Ded, Dziad, Khozyain, Hospodar, Khovanets', and Hodovanets'). The beliefs associated with this domestic spirit are best evidenced in Russian folklore. To the Russian peasants the Domovoy appeared as a little old man with a long grey beard and quick, fiery eyes; he was dressed in a bright red shirt, tied at the waist with a blue sash, and his whole body, except for his face, was covered with bristles.⁸ However, this was not the only form in which the spirit appeared, for he was also known to be able to change himself at will into a dog, cat, bear, or even a chimney-sweep. Although his appearance was well known, it was nevertheless extremely difficult to catch sight of him, for he appeared to humans only before an impending misfortune; even then the prospect of meeting him face to face had its drawbacks, for it was a known fact that those who saw him were often struck dead on the spot or became permanently dumb.⁹

The beliefs in tutelary spirits, as is the case with other divinities, are not the same in all regions, and show the greatest variance from country to country. In Russia the Domovoy was believed to live on the pech' (stove),¹⁰ while in Ukraine the Domovyk was believed to reside under the threshold or in the attic.¹¹ In connection with the residence of the Domovyk under the threshold, it is interesting to note the old Ukrainian custom of blessing a new addition to the family by placing the baby on the threshold. This ceremony was called "osvyatyty dytya cherez porih" (to bless the child over the threshold), and its purpose was undoubtedly to place the child under the protection of the family spirit.¹²

The functions of the Domovoy were numerous. He guarded the household and its possessions against other Domovye (plural of Domovoy),

against evil spirits, and against the malicious spells of witches and sorcerers; he advised and helped the khozyain (the head of the household) in various undertakings — in fact the Domovoy was even believed to steal from others to increase the wealth of his own household; he protected and looked after the farm animals, especially his favorites, the horses; and he facilitated the road to matrimony for the girls of the household by enticing eligible bachelors to pay visits.¹³ In addition the Domovoy was also believed to be capable of foretelling the future, and his crying and sighing at night was interpreted as a premonition that the khozyain was going to die.¹⁴ Before war, famine or conflagrations the Domovoy was believed to wander through the fields and pastures howling incessantly.¹⁵

The Domovoy was also believed to be a very fickle spirit who was easily angered, especially if the family did not respect him and did not provide him with his traditional offerings of food.¹⁶ Once he was angered, the Domovoy's wrath was believed to bring misfortune to the household — a misfortune which could only be alleviated by the magical propitiation of the spirit. Of the many rites for appeasing the Domovoy, the most effective one consisted of slaughtering a black rooster at midnight and smearing its blood in all corners of the house, at the same time chanting powerful spells and incantations.¹⁷ Other magical rites were also used to punish the Domovoy, should he become mischievous and annoy the members of the household by such pranks as making noises at night, tripping up elderly people, disturbing sleeping infants, or pulling women's hair.¹⁸

As has been mentioned above, the Domovoy was very fond of horses. He was usually believed to have a favorite horse for whom he displayed

special affection by obtaining extra portions of grain for it and by braiding its mane.¹⁹ At night, when everyone was asleep, the Domovoy took great pleasure in riding his horses — a fact which explained why sometimes stabled horses were found in the morning covered with sweat.²⁰ However, if the Domovoy indulged in the riding of horses by night too often, the peasant could easily curtail these excursions by stabling a white billy-goat, the Domovoy's deadly enemy, with the horses.²¹ The association of the Domovoy with horses, in which he was probably conceived as the guardian spirit of these animals, is reflected in an old Russian custom where by a peasant who had bought a new horse introduced it to the stable with the following supplication: "Vot tebe Khozyain, mokhnatyi zver'! Lyubi ego, poy da kormi!"²²

The moving of a family from one home to another prompted it to take elaborate measures to entice the Domovoy to move as well; in fact it was believed that unless this was done, life in the new house, which lacked its own Domovoy, would be unhappy until the khozyain died and became its guardian spirit. Hence the family performed the following ceremony to entice the Domovoy to move:²³ a clean pot was filled with coals from the stove of the old home and the Domovoy was entreated: "Milosti prosim, Dedushka, k nam na novoe zhil'e!"; the pot was then covered with a clean tablecloth and carried to the new home, where, after an official welcome by the khozyain with the traditional salt and bread, the tablecloth was removed and shaken towards the four corners of the house and the coals were placed in the stove of the new dwelling; the pot used to transport Domovoy to the new residence was then broken into pieces and secretly buried at night under a corner of the house, perhaps to make sure that the Domovoy remained in the

new dwelling.

It is interesting to note that, as was the case with the original Sky-god, Domovoy appears to have been disassociated from his original functions. Whenever he became closely connected with any one activity or even any particular building in the courtyard, the name Domovoy was replaced by another name derived from this new association. In time this evolutionary process gave rise to such domestic spirits as Dvorovoy, Khlivnyk, Ovinnik, Bannik, Pasichnyk, Konyushnyk, and other spirits with whom new beliefs, marked by various degrees of individuality, were later associated.

II NATURE-SPIRITS

Field divinities. The field divinities or Corn-spirits among the Eastern Slavs differ greatly both in name and attributes from region to region. It appears that most of these divinities are of very early origin but unfortunately in many cases folklore preserved little more than the spirit's name, its association with grain, and a vague conception of its appearance. The recorded East Slavic field divinities included the Polevyk, Polevoy, Belun, Poludnitsa, Poludnevyk, Zhytnyi Did, Zhytna Baba, and Zelizna Baba; these were believed to dwell in fields and meadows and to care for the crops, providing them with sufficient rain and sunshine, and protecting them from storms and evil spirits.

In White Russia the Corn-spirit, Belun, was conceived in the form of an old man dressed in white clothing and characterized by a long grey beard. At harvest time Belun was believed to walk about the countryside and help the hard-working peasants to reap the grain.²⁴ In Russia the Polevoy was sometimes conceived as dressed all over in white, and at

other times as being as black as the earth, with grass instead of hair. It was believed that the Polevoy was so angry at lazy people and drunkards that he would strangle them if they fell asleep in the field instead of working in it.²⁵ In Ukraine the Polevyk was conceived in human form, but was characterized by a tail, claws, small horns, bristle-covered skin, and sometimes even wings.²⁶ The Zhytnyi Did, on the other hand, was believed to appear in the form of an old man with three heads characterized by long, white beards and fiery tongues.²⁷ The polycephalic appearance of this divinity resembles the early Slavic idols and hence undoubtedly denotes the ancient origin of the Zhytnyi Did; unfortunately the memory of his ancient functions and attributes and the beliefs associated with him has been lost.

As for the field divinities conceived in feminine form — the Zhytna Baba, Zelizna Baba, and Poludnitsa — these appear to be only vaguely differentiated, and except for their functions of looking after and protecting fields and crops, little is preserved by folklore about their activities and appearance.

Forest divinities. The forest divinities of the Eastern Slavs were personified primarily by the Lisovyk (also known as, Leshyi, Lisovyi, Lesnyk, Lisun, Leshak, and Polisun), but other wood-spirits, such as the Pidlesnyk, Chuhayster, Lisnytsi or Bohyni, and Lisovi or Dyki Lyudy also existed. The Lisovyk usually appeared in the imagination of the peasants as a powerful muzhyk dressed in a sheepskin coat, which he wore inside-out.²⁸ He had green hair and claws on his hands, and could change his size from that of the tallest tree in the forest to that of the shortest blade of grass. In addition he could take the shape or

form of any tree, bush, stump, animal, or bird in the forest. It was also believed that some Lisovyky lived as hermits, making their homes in tree hollows of the densest part of the forest, while others lived as married men in fine mansions with their wives -- the Lisunytsi (or Leshachikhi) -- and their children -- the Lisunky (or Leshonki). Whenever a Lisovyk married, the woods resounded with strange noises, the screeching and howling of his wedding guests.²⁹

All the forest animals were believed to be under the power of the Lisovyk, especially the wolves; owing to this power he was sometimes known as Polisun, the wolf-shepherd.³⁰ The favorite animal of the Lisovyk was the bear, and it was believed that the spirit spent most of his time in its company. The Ukrainians believed that when the Lisovyk sometimes had too much to drink and fell asleep near a stream or a lake, the bear remained to stand over him and to protect him from his mortal enemy, the Vodyanyk.³¹

One of the Lisovyk's favorite pastimes was to lead astray people who were travelling through the woods by imitating the cries of a baby or the groans of a dying person.³² Anyone who attempted to investigate these noises was lured by the Lisovyk deeper and deeper into the forest until finally the person wandered in circles, hopelessly lost. The lost person, however, could easily find his way out of the forest by turning his clothing inside out and switching his shoes from one foot to the other. Another of Lisovyk's pranks was to exchange wooden logs for small children left unattended in the forest.³³ These logs later came to life as children; however they were not normal youngsters, but ugly, stupid children who possessed the strength of a horse. It was believed that if one took these

children home they would behave as simple but obedient youngsters and faithfully perform their duties, but that in the twelfth year they would run away back into the forest.

It is interesting to note that the Lisovyk, although often very mischievous, was conceived, like most other East Slavic nature-spirits, not as an essentially malevolent divinity, but as one who could be propitiated and thus induced to help man. In the spring Ukrainian shepherds used to leave a cow tied to a tree deep in the forest, as an offering to the Lisovyk in the hope of ensuring good grazing and the safety of their flocks.³⁴ Also hunters desiring good and safe hunting were known to propitiate this divinity with various offerings of food.³⁵

As for the other forest-spirits — the Dyki Lyudy, Lisnytsi, Bohyni, Chuhayster, and Pidlesnyk, only the last two, the Chuhayster and the Pidlesnyk, appear to possess individual characteristics, the others being identified with forest-spirits in general, as personified by the Lisovyk. The belief in the Chuhayster is best attested among the Ukrainian Hutsuls, where this divinity was conceived as a giant dressed in white clothing. He was believed to be very friendly towards man and at the same time extremely dangerous to evil beings, whom he was believed to kill and eat.³⁶ The Pidlesnyk or Perelesnyk was conceived as a handsome youth who attempted to seduce girls and women who walked alone in the forest. Moreover, he was also believed to assume the form of deceased loved ones, usually of young husbands, and to visit the widows nightly in their form.³⁷

Water divinities. Water divinities in East Slavic demonology form perhaps the most interesting group of the nature-spirits. At the head of this group was the most powerful water-spirit, the Vodyanyk (also known

as the Vodyanoy or Vodovyk).³³ This spirit was conceived, in the imagination of the people, as a bald old man with a swollen face, a big belly, and webbed feet. He wore a hat made of fishnets, a belt of water grasses, and an overcoat which always had water dripping from its left pocket.³⁹ By this last feature, it was believed, the Vodyanyk could always be distinguished from ordinary humans. In addition to his human form the Vodyanyk appeared in the form of many animals and fish. As may be expected this divinity was imagined to inhabit rivers, streams, and lakes; his homes, which were believed to be located at the bottom of large bodies of water, consisted of beautiful stone palaces, wherein the Vodyanyk kept his great wealth, including whole herds of horses and cattle.⁴⁰ At night, especially under a full moon, the Vodyanyk was believed to swim over the surface of the water and look for mischief, taking great pleasure in drowning foolhardy persons who dared to walk by the water's edge. He was believed to be particularly dangerous and malicious in the springtime or when he was getting married, for during these periods he went on rampages, tearing fishnets, upsetting boats, damaging mill-wheels, flooding the fields, bursting dams, tearing down bridges, and drowning cattle and even people.⁴¹ During such rampages the Vodyanyk was propitiated by fishermen and millers, who offered him various sacrifices, such as pigs, sheep, cattle, and his favorite dish — a horse smeared with honey. Moreover, it is possible that human sacrifices too were once offered, for there are records of millers in Russia pushing in nocturnal travellers from the mill-pond dam in the hope of appeasing the Vodyanoy.⁴² If, however, the Vodyanyk was in a good mood, and such occasions appear to have been not too infrequent, he was known to help people by such

actions as driving fish into the nets of fishermen and guiding fishing boats back to shore safely during storms.⁴³

It is interesting to note that the Vodyanyk, as was the case with the Domovyk, underwent a process of disassociation of his functions, becoming replaced in certain areas by divinities whose names are derived from the type of water with which they were associated; for example, Ocheretyanyk, from the word ocheret, meaning "reeds" or "rushes", and hence the name of the divinity denoting "the one of the rushes". It is also very probable that in Rus' mythology this process went even further, for it appears, judging from such names as Dniro-Slovuta preserved in folklore, that the water divinities which were associated with large and important bodies of water were personified by individualized deities.

The female divinities in the group of water-spirits included Rusalky, Mavky, Vily, and Berehyni. About these spirits, and particularly about the Rusalky, there developed the most poetic beliefs in East Slavic folklore — beliefs which were later so beautifully recreated in the East Slavic, and especially Ukrainian, romantic literature. Very little is known about the water divinities called Berehyni, who together with Vily are recorded in early chronicles.⁴⁴ It is very probable that these spirits, according to an etymological interpretation which derives their name from the word bereh, meaning "shore" or "bank", represented water-nymphs associated with the shores of lakes and rivers, and that at a later date they were incorporated into the general system of beliefs about Rusalky. As for Vily, they too are poorly represented in the East Slavic folklore; however, judging by the beliefs about them preserved in the South Slavic folklore, they appear to have resembled Rusalky very closely.⁴⁵ It has been suggested by some scholars that the Rusalky are a later creation of

the popular imagination, and that the name Rusalka should be derived from the feast of Rusalya, which in turn was borrowed from the Graeco-Roman feast of roses, dies rosalia.⁴⁶ Hence they contended that the name Rusalka was probably originally associated with the women officiating in the Rusalya feast, and that in time this name was transferred to the nature-spirits venerated in conjunction with the feast, namely the Berehyni and Vily. However, the name Rusalka also has a Slavic etymological interpretation, and may be derived from the word ruslo, which means "river-bed" or "current", and hence may easily be connected with the concept of these divinities which appear primarily as river-nymphs. Furthermore, this derivation is analogous to the derivation of Berehyni, and hence it is possible that originally two separate categories of river-nymphs were worshipped, and that due to their similar characteristics they were later combined in the concept of Rusalky.

In East Slavic folklore the Rusalky were believed to personify the souls of young girls who had committed suicide by drowning. The appearance and attributes of these nymphs varied greatly with the country. In Russia, particularly in the north, the Rusalky appeared as wicked and unattractive female water-spirits who seized persons walking along the water's edge at night, and drowned them with gruesome tortures.⁴⁷ In Ukraine, on the other hand, the Rusalky were conceived as gay water-nymphs who retained gracious maidenly charms (in this respect they resemble the South Slavic Vily).⁴⁸ They sat at night beside rivers and lakes, combing their beautiful long tresses, singing melodic songs, and bewitching the passers-by with their irresistible beauty and sweet voices. Any man who let himself be lured into their midst was tickled to death, but this was imagined to be a most agreeable way to die, a

kind of euthanasia in the arms of an alluring Rusalka.

The Rusalky were believed to lead a sort of double existence, both as aquatic and as silvan spirits.⁴⁹ In the winter they lived in beautiful underwater palaces in deep, remote waters. With the arrival of spring, the Rusalky began their activities, rising to the surface of the waters, swimming about, and playing noisy games. At this time of year they were also very mischievous, and in addition to their favorite pastime of bewitching nocturnal travellers they also enjoyed entangling fishermen's nets and tearing holes in mill-pond dams.⁵⁰ In the late spring and early summer, especially at the feast of Rusalya, the Rusalky were believed to possess great powers, and were considered to be very dangerous. Hence, during the week of the Rusalya feast people were afraid to walk near rivers and lakes after dark, and attempted to propitiate the Rusalky with various sacrifices.⁵¹ As protection against Rusalky during the Rusalya week, girls carried with them the magical polyn'-zillya. It was believed that whenever a Rusalka encountered a girl she asked, "Polyn' chy petrushka?" If the girl answered "Polyn'", the Rusalka would scornfully retort, "Sama ty zhyn!" and run away; but if the girl answered "Petrushka", the Rusalka would shout with glee, "Ty moya dushka!" and tickle the girl to death.⁵² After the Rusalya feast, the water-nymphs were believed to leave the rivers and lakes and go out into the meadows and forests, where they picked flowers, sang, danced, and played games.⁵³ In the woods the Rusalky especially enjoyed swinging on tree branches and weaving garlands in the moonlight, while in the fields they liked joining hands in circles to dance and sing. Ukrainians believed that the places where the Rusalky danced were easily recognizable, for the grass was much greener and taller there.⁵⁴

Similar to the Rusalky were the Mavky which were usually believed to be beautiful nymphs associated with fields and forests; however, they were also imagined in some regions as the souls of children who drowned or who had died before Christening. The name Mavka (also Mayka or Navye) is derived from the Old Slavonic word nav, meaning "dead"; consequently, the Mavky originally probably denoted souls of dead children.⁵⁵ In the popular imagination of the Ukrainians, Mavky appeared as plump children with long hair, dressed in white shirts.⁵⁶ As the nature-spirits associated with the souls of dead children, the Mavky were also known in some parts of the country as Poterchata or Loskotivky. They too were believed to inhabit rivers and lakes, and to rise to the surface of the waters at night, playing games, splashing water, giggling, and clapping their hands.⁵⁷ Like the Rusalky, the Mavky tried to lure passers-by to the edge of the water (the latter by imitating crying babies), where the victim would be tickled to death.⁵⁸ During the week of Rusalya the Mavky were also considered dangerous, and were believed to run through the fields at night woefully wailing:

Ukh, ukh, solomyanyi dukh,
Mene maty porodyla,
Nekhreshchenu polozhyla!⁵⁹

The above verse reflects the belief that the Mavky were commonly imagined to be under God's curse, because they represented the souls of unbaptized children. Ukrainians maintained that if one encountered a Mavka, to free it from this curse one had only to say, "Khreshchu tebe vo imya Ottsya, i Syna, i Svyatoho Dukha," and the soul of the Mavka would be released from this curse and go to heaven. If, however, in seven years' time nobody released a Mavka from the curse, it was believed

to develop into a Rusalka.⁶⁰

In addition to the above-mentioned water-spirits, the Eastern Slavs also believed in other aquatic divinities (such as, Melyuzhiny, Mors'ki Lyudy, and Morskoy Tsar'); but these were either not very individualized and hence for the most part possessed characteristics similar to the Vodyanyk and the Rusalky, or incorporated foreign beliefs and consequently represented divinities of doubtful Slavic origin.

III DEMONS

The demons in East Slavic folklore appear to have consisted of two vaguely differentiated groups, the Chorty or Dit'ky, and fiendish human beings — the Upyri, Vovkulaky, and Mary. It is almost impossible to deduce what spirits the Chorty group comprised in the past from the beliefs preserved about them in folklore. These beliefs formed an ever-expanding field, for under the influence of Christian attitudes the Dit'ky continued to absorb various nature and ancestor-spirits, incorporating their individual characteristics into an unrecognizable heterogeneous whole. The concept of the devil, therefore, varied from region to region, and he was known under a multitude of names, including Chort, Dit'ko, Kutsyi, Schezby, Pek-mu, Nechystyi, Lukavyi, Vin, Toy, Strakh, Bis, Diyavol, Zlyi Dukh, and Satana. In Russia the Chort was believed to be an entirely malevolent demon sometimes even possessing ogreish qualities, and hence was feared and dreaded by the people.⁶¹ In Ukraine he was conceived somewhat differently, and he appeared, though basically a malicious being, as more of a mischievous spirit, whom it was believed possible to propitiate, and not only to predispose in favour of

man, but even to fool, cheat, and abuse.⁶²

In the popular imagination the Chort was believed to appear in many shapes, being able to take the form of human beings, animals, and birds, and even inanimate objects.⁶³ He was usually conceived as a small, very dark man whose skin was covered with long, black, bristle-like hair. He had dog's, goat's, or chicken's legs, a short tail (whence probably the name Kutsyi), a wide face with a long nose, and tiny eyes that glowed like red-hot coals. His hands were believed to end in claws, and he had a tiny pair of goat's or ram's horns growing from his head. Usually he appeared dressed in "German clothing" (this term was probably applied to western clothing in general), and wore a tall hat.⁶⁴ At other times he could appear as a pig with horns, a ram, a goat, a dog, a cat, a black rooster, a mouse, a soldier, or even as one's favorite kum. Chorty were believed to live a married life, residing with their families either in underground palaces or in abandoned homes.⁶⁵ Although they were born in the same way as men, Chorty did not die naturally, and man if possible had to find means of keeping the breed from becoming too numerous. It was believed that man could easily dispose of Dit'ky providing he knew the formula for a secret brew of powerful magical herbs; such a brew, when sprinkled on a devil, was known to incinerate him on the spot.⁶⁶ Also the heavenly fire in the form of thunderbolts (hrim) was imagined to kill numerous devils, and this the Dit'ky feared most of all. So whenever it thundered the Dit'ky squealed like pigs and scurried about from place to place seeking a spot to hide in. The people believed that when lightning struck a tree, a house, or even a man it was because a Dit'ko was hiding behind them.⁶⁷ Next to hrim and the magical brew, the Chorty feared most the svyachena voda; this

charm, although it did not cause any permanent damage to the Dit'ko, burned fiercely, and hence he was believed to run away at the mere mention of it.⁶⁸ Folklore has preserved numerous customs of using holy water to sprinkle homes, fields, cattle, and even possessed people, to all appearance with the intention of chasing away the Chorty and other evil spirits.

In legends the Chorty are often associated even with functions which were previously attributed to heathen major deities, such as the invention of fire and its presentation to man, and the introduction of the craft of smithery.⁶⁹ Chorty are also represented in many folktales as taking great pleasure in playing pranks on men, including such tricks as leading nocturnal travellers and drunkards astray, and luring them into bushes, mud, and quicksand.⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that the devil in Ukrainian legends is a very highly personalized being and is believed to possess many human qualities and traits of character; the Dit'ky are often represented with human qualities or failings — some are very wise and shrewd, others are very naive and stupid; some are conceived as mischievous and malevolent, and others appear as helpful, just, and even honest.⁷¹ In many tales the Dit'ko is represented as going into partnership with man in various business undertakings, in which a smart man often gets the better of the devil. Chorty were also known to reward men with great wealth for helping them in difficult predicaments, such as saving them from certain death.

In addition to the legions of Dit'ky and Chorty, the Eastern Slavs also believed in such individualized fiends as Upyri, Vovkulaky, and Mary. The Upyr (also Opir, Vepyr, Upir, and Vampir) was imagined to represent the soul of an evil dead person who returned from the

grave nightly to suck the blood of living people. It appears that the beliefs in vampires developed from dream-visions of the deceased in threatening situations, and that the blood-sucking attributes of these souls of the dead arose out of the association of a lack of blood with the deceased. Their craving for this life-giving element is reflected in their continuous attempts to extract it from the living. The name Upyr is very probably derived from the Turkic word uber, which means "sorcerer", whence probably its association with supernatural powers.⁷² Similar beliefs, connecting the Upyr with dead magicians, are also evidenced among the Russians.⁷³

In Ukraine the Upyri were imagined to be the children born from a union of a devil or a werewolf with a witch; this blood-relationship between these evil spirits is implicit in the saying: "Upyr i nepevnyi, usim vid'mam krevnyi."⁷⁴ They were believed to have two souls, and even when killed they could still carry on, for only one soul died and the other continued to live in the grave. The Upyr did not decompose in the grave, and his face, because of the blood he was imagined to have sucked, was believed to be red as a beet. There is a Ukrainian expression describing a red-faced person as "Chervonyi yak upyr."⁷⁵ In some parts of Ukraine, the popular imagination conceived two kinds of Upyri the "living" Upyr and the "dead" Upyr.⁷⁶ The two were sometimes believed to be on friendly terms with one another, while at other times they were believed to fight with each other. Where they were imagined to be on friendly terms, the live Upyr, who was believed to be very strong, carried about the "dead" Upyr on his back, for the latter was supposed to be very weak and could not walk by himself. Wherever the two were imagined to be on bad terms with one another, the "live" Upyr was conceived

as friendly towards people, and was believed to fight the "dead" one to protect the people from him. Thus, while the "live" Upyr was still young and strong, he managed easily to control the "dead" one, but as he grew older and weaker the "dead" Upyr began to attack people more often. When the "live" Upyr died, he too was believed to become a demon and attack people.⁷⁷ The Upyr was believed to be especially dangerous during the period of the month marked by the rise of the molodyk (new moon). Stimulated by its light the Upyr was imagined to come out of his grave and begin his fiendish activities with frightful howlings ("vyye tak strashno azh misyats' blidne").⁷⁸

It was considered very difficult to protect oneself against an Upyr, for in addition to his enormous strength the Upyr was believed to possess the ability to pass through the smallest openings.⁷⁹ Moreover, he could take the form of various domestic animals and thus approach his victims unsuspected. In order to make one's home safe against Upyri, therefore, a person had to resort to various magical practices, including placing a piece of iron in the window, painting crosses on gates, doors, and windows, and sprinkling the whole household with svyachena voda.⁸⁰ In cases where persistent Upyri made life unbearable for the villagers, the community took collective protective measures; the grave of the suspected deceased was then dug up in daylight, usually in the presence of a priest, who sprinkled the grave and coffin with svyachena voda to incapacitate the Upyr, and a yasen' (ash-tree) stake driven through the heart of the corpse.³¹ Sometimes, moreover, further precautionary measures were taken, and the suspected Upyr was bound up and beheaded. If, however, the Upyr possessed extremely strong supernatural powers and all the above-mentioned precautionary

measures failed to stop him, as a final act his body was exhumed, cremated on a pyre of thorn-wood, and his ashes cast to the winds.⁸²

The beliefs in the Vovkulak (also Volkolak, Vovkulab, or Volkun) appear to be of very early origin and are recorded already in the twelfth century in the epic Lay of Ihor's Campaign.⁸³ The fact that the Slavic beliefs in the Vovkulak are very similar, in both name and function of the demon, to foreign beliefs in werewolves, as evidenced in the Greek Voulkolakas and the Turkic Vurkolak,⁸⁴ probably denotes a very ancient, perhaps even prehistoric, origin of these concepts. In the popular imagination of the Eastern Slavs, the Vovkulaky were believed to have two origins; those which were born as werewolves from a union of a wolf and a woman and those which were turned from men into wolves by witches' spells.⁸⁵ Common to both types of Vovkulaky was the belief that the light of the new moon provided the activating force which caused them to change at night into wolf's form. In an interesting Ukrainian belief the Vovkulak was imagined to have a tiny opening in his armpit, to which converged all the skin of his body. Through this opening he was believed to turn himself literally inside out, the wolf's body coming out and the human body entering.⁸⁶ In his human form the Vovkulak was readily recognizable, for he was imagined to be distinguished from other people by wolf bristles on his skin and by wolf's teeth. In the form of a wolf, the Vovkulak was believed to be recognized by the fact that while three of his legs were wolf legs one leg was human.⁸⁷

In addition to his ability to change himself into a wolf, the Vovkulak could also take the form of certain animals, including a cow, horse, black cat, and a dog. As well as being able to acquire these various forms himself, he was also believed to possess the ability to cast spells

on people and change them into animals, in which form they were believed to remain for many years, until the curse expired.⁸⁸ In their malicious actions against people, of which the favorite of the Vovklaky were outright assaults upon nocturnal travellers, the Vovkulaky were also known to steal milk from the cows, choke horses and sheep, and send all kinds of mory (diseases) on the cattle.⁸⁹ When a Vovkulak died, and this occurred very rarely because only very powerful magic or strong supernatural beings could kill him, the people believed that wolves gathered at his grave to howl and wail in mourning for their "brother".⁹⁰

The least personalized of the demons was the Mara (also Mora, Morok, Marukha, Blud, and Kikomora), who appears to have personified plague and pestilence.⁹¹ The demon may be identified with the Greek Mora and German Mar,⁹² who represented demons of the night, and whose function is preserved in the English word "nightmare", denoting the tormentor of sleeping people. In East Slavic folklore the association of Mara with the night is reflected in the name Nichka, by which this demon was also known.⁹³ In the popular imagination Mara usually appeared as a woman whose soul was believed to leave her body at night and to torment people in various appearances. She was sometimes identified with death in which form she was imagined to walk around at night calling out the names of people under their windows; it was believed that whoever answered her call would die in the near future.⁹⁴ In other beliefs Mara was known to use an invisible net with which she blinded people and clouded their minds, so that she could lead them into dangerous places where they would perish.⁹⁵ In the function of malevolent nocturnal divinities, the Mory were also conceived in some parts in the form of tiny fiendish women who took great pleasure in

choking sleeping people or throwing bricks at them.⁹⁶

IV WITCHES AND SORCERERS

The witches and sorcerers in the East Slavic demonology form a very large group which derives its origin, to all appearance, in the pre-Christian offices of various religious leaders. The best preserved craft in this group is that of the witches or Vid'my; the name Vid'ma (also known as Ved'ma) appears to have been derived from the Old Slavonic verb vedati, meaning "to see", and hence originally the name Vid'ma probably denoted a "seer" or a diviner.⁹⁷ In folklore the Vid'my were conceived either as old hags or as beautiful young women, and were divided into two kinds — those born as Vid'my, recognized by their short tails, and those who learned the profession.⁹⁸ The latter kind, which were believed to be by far the most dangerous, were selected by the "born" Vid'my from evil, nagging women and initiated into the craft. Candidates for Vid'my were believed to have to serve a period of apprenticeship after their initiation, during which they acquired a knowledge of witchcraft and developed their supernatural powers.⁹⁹

Of the many different East Slavic witches those in the Ukrainian folklore, and particularly the Vid'my from Kiev, possessed the greatest sphere of action. In the popular imagination these Vid'my were known to do the following things: they stole the milk from the peasants' cows; they prevented dew from forming by stealing it; they captured rain clouds and hid them under lock and key in graves; they caused lightning, hail, and snow storms; they sent sparrows, caterpillars, and insects into the fields; they stole stars from the sky; they caused starvation and pestilence; and they cast spells upon people, transforming them into various

animals.¹⁰⁰ However, in addition to their malevolent activities, the Ukrainian Vid'my were believed to do many good things for the people; they were known to oppose and prevent other Vid'my from putting into effect these harmful measures, to charm away demons and thieves, to find lost things, to foretell the future, to make up love and hate potions, and to cure ailing people.¹⁰¹ They were also believed to know how to fly, and were often imagined to soar across the sky on shovels, brooms, pigs, goats, and wolves. Once a year the Ukrainian Vid'my were thought to hold their conventions on the Lysa Hora, a barren hill in a forest near Kiev.¹⁰² At such conventions the Vid'my sat around large bonfires, relating their past experiences and discussing various new techniques and magic charms pertaining to their profession. On the very top of the hill, the most powerful Vid'my prepared a magic brew, under the direction of the Vid'mak (the witch king). This magic brew, which consisted of snakes, toads, hearts of Upyri, and various poisonous herbs, was later apportioned by the Vid'mak to each Vid'ma for magical use throughout the coming year. All through the convention young Vid'my danced, chanted, and played mysterious games. The convention ended with a wild orgy to which Did'ky, Upyri, and Vovkulaky were invited.

In Ukrainian beliefs it was also imagined that a person could capture a Vid'ma and force her to do his bidding. A sure method of capturing a Vid'ma was to drive a spike which had been blessed by holy water into her shadow; when nailed in this manner the Vid'ma was believed to be incapacitated and unable to move.¹⁰³ Another method consisted of binding the Vid'ma with a belt which had been worn for seven years and hung up in church to acquire sacred powers. When trussed up with such a belt the Vid'ma was believed to be unable to escape, and hence could

be beaten until she agreed to the terms her captor set for her release.¹⁰⁴ However, for the most part Vid'my were feared, and there are records of women who were suspected as malevolent Vid'my being burned at the stake, drowned, or buried alive.¹⁰⁵

The male counterpart of Vid'ma was represented by Vid'mak, imagined as a little old man with grey hair.¹⁰⁶ Whereas there were believed to be numerous Vid'my, there was only one Vid'mak; he was imagined to act as their leader, regulating their activities and apportioning their responsibilities. Basically, the Vid'mak was believed to be a good person, and it was thought that he even tried to help people by controlling and neutralizing the malicious activities of the Vid'my.

In addition to Vid'my and the Vid'mak, the East Slavic folklore preserved many other offices of people with supernatural abilities, including the following — Znakhar, Znakharka, Charivnyk, Charodey, Charivnytsya, Charodeynitsa, Sheptun, Sheptukha, Okudnik, Okudnitsa, Koldun, Koldunitsa, Vorozhbyt, Vorozhka, and Kharakternyk.¹⁰⁷ The most popular of these magical practitioners were the Znakhari and Znakharky, who were believed to possess great knowledge of magic, and yet were not connected with evil forces. They occupied themselves principally by curing various illnesses with herbs and incantations, foretelling future events, and diverting harmful spells cast upon people by the Vid'my.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand such magical practitioners as the Charivnyky and Charivnytsi were believed to receive the help of evil forces. Consequently, they were imagined to interfere in all aspects of man's life, and were conceived capable of destroying family happiness, harming a person's health, making a person love or hate some other person, and even causing a person's death.¹⁰⁹ The most respected and loved of the magical practitioners were

the Ukrainian Kharakternyky. From the point of view of originality, the Kharakternyky represent the most interesting office of the entire group of East Slavic magicians and sorcerers, for they consisted exclusively of old, retired Zaporozhtsi (Ukrainian cossaks). The Kharakternyky, who were known to be God-fearing men, acted in such capacities as turning away storms, hail, and lightning from the fields, producing needed rain, charming serious wounds, healing the sick, and divining future events. They were also believed to know how to charm weapons and stop bullets, for which they were especially esteemed among the Zaporozhtsi.¹¹⁰

It should be noted, moreover, that the conceived powers and functions of the various magical practitioners varied not only from country to country or from region to region, but also from practitioner to practitioner. Hence, no one office of magical practitioners was everywhere believed to possess the same powers, for the magical strength attributed to the individual practitioner depended on the effectiveness of his magical endeavors by comparison with those of his rivals. Stemming from this belief in stronger and weaker Vid'my, Znakhari, or Charodeynitsy was the practice of seeking the aid of magical practitioners of renowned superior powers to undo or overcome charms (or any other harmful measures) believed to have been initiated by less powerful practitioners.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Povest' vremennykh let, V.P. Adrianova-Peretts ed., (Moscow, 1950), II, p. 33, and B.D. Grekov, The Culture of Kiev Rus (Moscow, 1947), p. 65.

2. See G. Vernadsky, The Origins of Russia (Oxford, 1959), p. 117.

3. According to H. Máchal, Nákres slovanského bájeslovi (Prague, 1891), p. 15.

4. Ibid., p. 16.
5. From N.S.Derzhavin, Slavyane v drevnosti (Moscow, 1945), p. 148.
6. See The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, J.Hastings ed., (Edinburg, 1927), IV, p. 324.
7. See Máchal op. cit., p. 77.
8. Ibid., p. 90.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, V.Hnatiuk ed., (Lviv, 1912), XXXIII, pp. xvi-xvii.
12. Ibid.
13. M.Markevych, Obychai, pover'ya, kukhnya i napitki Maloros-siyan (Kiev, 1860), p. 78.
14. Máchal, op. cit., p. 91.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 95.
17. Ibid., p. 96.
18. See Markevych, op. cit., pp. 77-78.
19. Máchal, op. cit., p. 92.
20. Ibid.
21. Markevych, op. cit., p. 78.
22. Máchal, loc. cit.
23. See Máchal, op. cit., pp. 92-93.
24. From A.Afanasiev, Poeticheskie vozzreniya Slavyan na pri-rodu (Moscow, 1866), I, pp. 93-94, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 140.
25. G.Alexinsky, "Slavonic Mythology," Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (New York, 1959), p. 301.
26. See Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xxi.

27. From Máchal, op. cit., p. 140.
28. Ibid. p. 124.
29. Ibid.
30. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xix.
31. Máchal, op. cit., p. 125.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Etnografichyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xx.
37. From Chubinskiy, Trudy etnograficheskoy eks-
piditsii v Zapadno-russkiy kray (St. Petersburg, 1872), I, p. 193, ac-
cording to Máchal, op. cit., p. 126.
38. From Máchal, op. cit., p. 143.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Alexinsky, op. cit., p. 301.
43. Máchal, op. cit., p. 143.
44. L.Niederle, Slavyanské drevnosti (Moscow, 1956), pp. 272-273.
45. Ibid., p. 273.
46. Ibid., p. 272.
47. See G.Alexinsky, op. cit., p. 302.
48. Ibid.
49. Máchal, op. cit., pp. 115-118.
50. Ibid., p. 116.
51. M.Maksymovych, "Rusalki po ponyatiyam ukrainskogo naroda,"
Nikolay Vasil'evich Gogol', V.Pokrovskiy ed., (Moscow, 1905), p. 117.

52. From Markevych, op. cit., pp. 80-81.
53. Alexinsky, op. cit., p. 303.
54. Máchal, op. cit., p. 117.
55. Niederle, op. cit., p. 271.
56. Máchal, op. cit., p. 120.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. From Maksymovych, op. cit., p. 117.
60. Máchal, loc. cit.
61. According to S.Kylymnyk, Ukrayins'kyi rik u narodnikh zvy-chayakh (Winnipeg, 1955), I, p. 61.
62. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xiii.
63. See P.Chubinskiy, "Narodnyya predstavleniya malorossovo chertyakh," Nikolay Vasilevich Gogol', V.Pokrovskiy ed., (Moscow, 1905), p. 130, and Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, pp. ix-x.
64. Chubinskiy, loc. cit.
65. Ibid., p. 131.
66. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xi.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., p. xii.
69. Ibid., p. xiii.
70. Chubinskiy, loc. cit.
71. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xiii.
72. Máchal, op. cit., p. 183.
73. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, pp. 302 and 557, according to Máchal, loc. cit.
74. P.Efimenko, "Upyri v narodnykh verovaniyakh," Nikolay Vasilevich Gogol', V.Pokrovskiy ed., (Moscow, 1905), p. 131.
75. From J.F.Golovackiy, Narodnye pesni Galitskoy i Ugorskoy Rusi (Moscow, 1873), p. 150, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 184.

76. P.Chubinskiy, Trudy etnograficheskoy-statisticheskoy ekspeditsii, I, p. 205, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 183.

77. From N.F.Sumtsov, Kul'turnye perezhivaniya (Kiev, 1890), p. 273, according to Máchal, loc. cit.

78. See Máchal, op. cit., p. 185.

79. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, pp. 557-560, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 184.

80. Chubinskiy, op. cit., I, 205, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 186.

81. Chubinskiy, loc. cit., according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 185.

82. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, pp. 558-575, according to Máchal op. cit., p. 186.

83. The author of the epic ascribes the werewolf qualities to Knyaz' Vseslav who is represented running in the form of a wolf from Kiev to Tmutorokan' during the night. See Slovo o polku Ihorevi, S. Hordyns'kyi ed., (Philadelphia, 1950), p. 20.

84. See Máchal, op. cit., p. 180.

85. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIV, p. xiii.

86. Ibid.

87. Máchal, op. cit., p. 182.

88. From A.Nikolaev, "Ocherki demonologii Malorossiyan Sudzhan-skago uezda" Vedomosti (1853), XIV, p. 115.

89. Chubinskiy, op. cit., I, p. 206, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 181.

90. Máchal, op. cit., p. 182.

91. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, p. 79, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 176.

92. Ibid.

93. See Máchal, op. cit., p. 179.

94. Afanasiev, loc. cit., from Máchal, op. cit., p. 176.

95. Etnografichnyi zbirnyk, XXXIII, p. xxiv.

96. From Afanasiev, op. cit., III, p. 137, according to Máchal, op. cit., p. 179.

97. P.Ivanov, P.Chubinskiy, and P.Efimenko, "Ved'ma po predstavleniyam malorusskago naroda," Nikolay Vasilevich Gogol', V.Pokrovskiy ed., (Moscow, 1905), p. 127.

98. Ibid., p. 124.

99. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

100. Nikolaev, op. cit., XIV, pp. 113-114.

101. Ibid.

102. A.Podbereski, Materyały do demonologii ludu ukraińskiego (Cracow, 1880), pp. 41-42.

103. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 115.

104. See Podbereski, op. cit., p. 30.

105. Ivanov, Chubinskiy, and Efimenko, op. cit., p. 129.

106. Ibid., pp. 125-126.

107. See Máchal, op. cit., p. 172.

108. Ivanov, Chubinskiy, and Efimenko, loc. cit.

109. Ibid.

110. See Máchal, op. cit., p. 173.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the above survey of the archeological, literary and folklore manifestations of the pre-Christian religious beliefs among the Eastern Slavs, it is possible to draw the following general conclusions about the mythology of Kievan Rus': the most prominent feature of this polytheistic religion appears to have been the worship of nature; at its basis lay the animistic concepts in which the entire world — the heavens, the atmosphere, and the earth — was peopled with various poetically conceived deities and other supernatural beings. Nature appeared to the early Eastern Slavs as a living being, mysterious and wonderful. Everything within it was imagined to think, speak, and act on the same level as human beings. At the head of this religious system stood the major deities who were the omnipotent rulers of the world; below the main gods were the minor divinities and demons who were subservient to the major deities; at the bottom of this divine hierarchy were human beings who were believed to possess supernatural powers, with which they could control, mitigate, and determine the forces of nature and the actions of the divinities and demons.

The religious cultus in Rus' mythology appears to have reached a fairly high level of development, being characterized by such features as temples, idols, ritual sacrifice, and priests. As the official state religion, Rus mythology possessed a definite pantheon of major deities, the worship of which was probably standardized across the country. There also appears to have existed a supreme godhead who was conceived as the creator of the universe, from whom the other deities and mankind traced

their lineage.

Contrary to the opinions expressed by earlier scholars, the presence of such highly developed concepts in Kievan Rus' mythology may not be entirely attributed to recent borrowings from the religions of the neighboring peoples; instead, judging from the fact that many of these features are evident in the archeological attestations of the preceding East Slavic and even proto-Slavic cultures, they may be conjectured to have had a much earlier period of adoption, perhaps even a native origin. Hence, as has been stated above, the allegation that Slavic mythology was the most primitive of all Indo-European pre-Christian religions can no longer be considered plausible. Certainly in comparison with the highly developed Greek and Roman religious systems Slavic mythology was definitely inferior, however it did not appear secondary to Celtic or Teutonic mythologies; in fact, it may have reached even a somewhat higher level, as a result of its proximity to the Greek and the Indo-Iranian religions and the later acceptance of Christianity.

It is the opinion of this author that Rus' mythology has not so far been sufficiently studied or satisfactorily explained, and although the information recorded in the chronicles has been thoroughly exhausted by various hypotheses and conjectures, there have been few attempts to analyze this source-material systematically on the basis of comparative mythology. Furthermore, very little has been done to interpret the information from the literary sources on the basis of the knowledge gained from studying archeology. Still less has been done to co-ordinate the archeological and literary attestations of heathen elements with the beliefs preserved in the folklore of the Eastern Slavs. The most promising approach to the problem in the

author's opinion would be to attempt to analyze on a comparative basis with other Indo-European folklores the wealth of material preserved in East Slavic legends, ritual songs, proverbs, and exorcisms. A better understanding of these often obscure and mysterious elements in the folklore will undoubtedly help to elucidate also the so far unexplained aspects of Rus' mythology.

In this work the author did not attempt to present an extensive study of the broad topic of Rus' mythology; instead, he tried to limit himself to a brief survey of its most prominent features, as evidenced in the East Slavic folklore, early literature, and archeology.

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